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The Art & Soul of Wilmington

March 2014

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How Jock Brandis is out to Save the World

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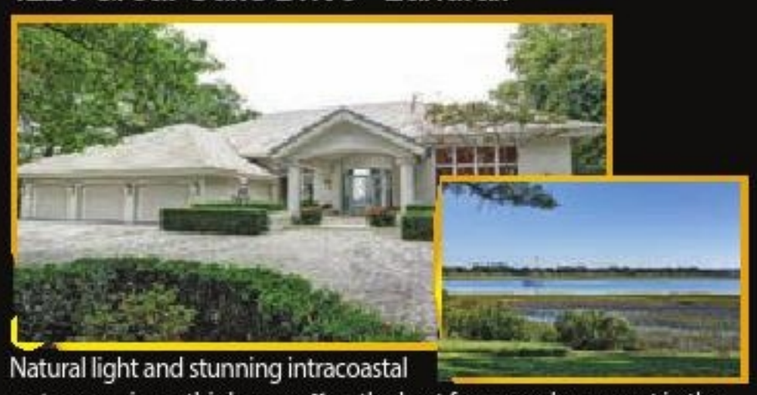

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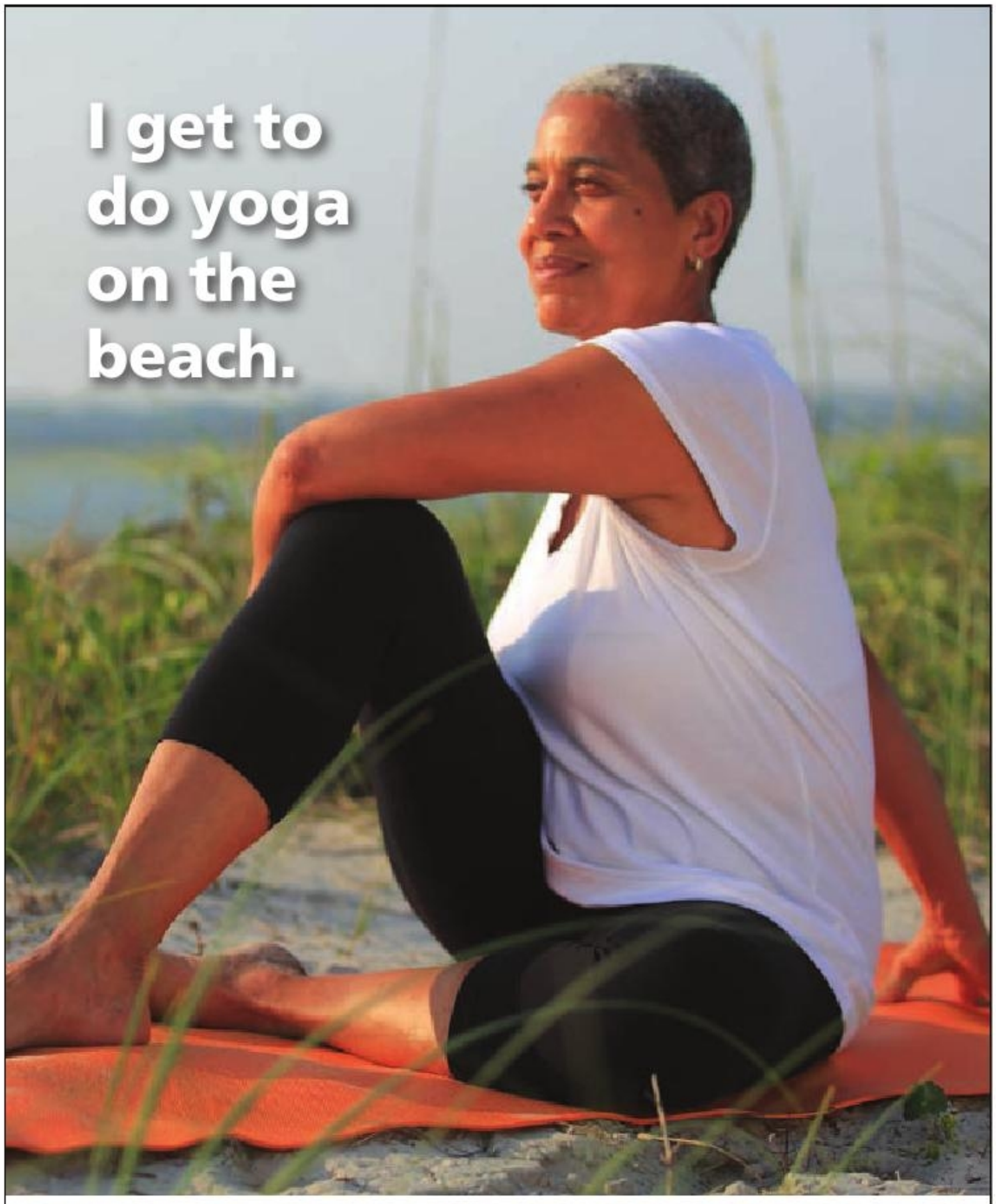

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MAGAZINE

VOLUME 2, NO. 3

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Cover photograph by Tim Sayer
Photograph this page by Virginia Holman

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A PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY BY LEICESTER HEMINGWAY
"WALL STREET IS NOT MONTE CARLO" BY J. PAUL GETTY
HOLIDAY HOSTING: HOW TO THROW FIVE PLAYBOY PARTIES
PLUS A PICTORIAL INVITATION TO A PLAYMATE HOUSE PARTY

By Jim Dodson

One chilly, rain-swept morning last month, the production staff at our magazine surprised me with a birthday breakfast of coffee and sweet rolls in the conference room, complete with a gift that warmed my aging teenage heart — a vintage copy of *Playboy* magazine. But more on that in a Hugh Hefner moment.

"So," asked Kira, "did you actually see your shadow?"

My birthday, you see, happens to fall February 2, aka Groundhog Day to a wider world that's thoroughly sick of winter, a red letter day I rejoice in sharing with the likes of rocker Graham Nash, model Christie Brinkley, Irish writer James Joyce, TV philosopher Tommy Smothers, Dog the Bounty Hunter and the late actress Farrah Fawcett. We're a jolly diverse bunch of G'hogs.

Apparently, somehow, sweet Kira had failed to hear that Punxsutawney Phil had in fact seen his shadow at the annual public event that was only slightly less interesting than this year's Super Bowl, presaging six more weeks of winter weather.

Groans rolled round the table. "That takes us two weeks into March," lamented someone over her cinnamon roll. "I'm sooooo cold! Rain. Sleet. Gray . . . ugggh!'

Though admittedly I am a true child of winter who loves all the above, including the occasional white-out blizzard, I sympathetically felt her psychic pain and pointed out that the beloved groundhog is often spectacularly wrong in his super-hyped forecasts, and that I — being something of a walking expert on February 2, with decades of experience to back up my observations — predict spring will be here before you can say "the taxman cometh."

This visibly lifted the spirits of the entire table, or maybe it was the sugary bear claws. In any case, that's exactly the moment our clever art director Andie Rose presented me with my gift, the aforementioned vintage men's magazine — the Special Eighth Anniversary Issue of *Playboy* magazine from December 1961.

My late Southern Baptist grandmother would have been grandly appalled, but the student of the magazine world in me was delighted almost beyond measure. Compared to anything one can see in seconds on the Internet or simply a rerun of *The Bachelor* any night of the week, this antique timepiece recalls a time when sex possessed an aura of respectable mystery and almost everything that mattered to a curious teenage mind was left almost entirely to the imagination.

The issue featured only two discreetly bare breasts (that I could find) in 210 pages but also a poignant remembrance of Ernest Hemingway by his brother, a review of Miles Davis' latest album, a tribute to slapstick comedy, a lone Vargas Girl and a chaste pictorial of Christmas at the new Playboy Club in Chicago where — egads — everyone kept their clothes on. Improbable as it may sound, many of us who came to love magazines like *Playboy* and *Esquire* during their peak years did so largely because of the great story telling and fabulous writers who graced their pages.

In truth, it must be said, teenage lust did play a role in this cultural awakening. I was 12, after all, the spring I discovered a stack of *Playboy* magazines kept in perfect chronological order on a high and dusty shelf at the back of Mr. Winterbottom's immaculate garage, which I was paid to sweep while the Winterbottoms went off to Carolina Beach for Easter.

Mowing lawns along our block in 1966 for three bucks a shot was my first paying gig, and the garage job paid a dizzying bonus of ten whole dollars. The discovery of all those taboo *Playboys* was pure adolescent ecstacy.

Foolishly, I told my best friend about the discovery and even spirited home a copy of the magazine for, ahem, closer inspection, which my mother later found hidden beneath the bathroom mat and occasioned an official conversation with my dad about the birds and the bees and the flowers and the trees and the sky up above.

And you know the rest.

It was, after all, sudden spring in Carolina, middle March in fact, and everything was either popping out or rising up voluptuously — azalea blooms,

ACC basketball, tree sap, afternoon temperatures, the height of mini skirts on models in *Life* magazine, and so forth.

For better or worse, crazy as it sounds, I will always associate the pleasant smell of a freshly mown lawn and the musk of trimmed boxwoods with my own teenage springtime awakening. My best friend's mom, a song went some years later, really had it going on.

Unfortunately, within hours of my extraordinary discovery at the back of the Winterbottom garage, half the neighborhood kids had gathered and done more damage pawing through Mr. W's naughty archive than any dedicated hit squad of school librarians or my own Southern Baptists aunts most certainly would have done. Mysteriously, he never mentioned a word about the tattered editions, leading me to wonder if Mrs. W even knew of their existence.

What a difference fifty years makes.

Some years ago as another March appeared at our doorstep, my wife was amused to discover that I appeared more interested in the White Flower Farm spring planting guide than browsing her latest Victoria's Secret catalog as I soaked weary bones in the tub after a long day working in the yard.

"Don't tell me you've finally outgrown your teenage lust," she gently needled, bringing me a welcome Sam Adams beer.

"It's simply nature's way," I agreed. "Teenage lust is eventually replaced by middle-aged gardenlust. That happens to men as we age, science has shown — in my case, for better or worse, it's stronger every March."

She smiled, only half buying it. "Gardenlust, eh?"

"Yes. It's a well-known seasonal human condition characterized by an uncontrollable urge, predominantly in males after a certain age, to get one's hands on luscious mounds of virgin soil in an effort to grow something beautiful. Symptoms include, but are not limited to, coveting other people's gardens, addiction to garden catalogs and a general longing to become a landscape architect."

"In other words, you're more plowboy than playboy now." Her amusement was complete.

"I wouldn't have put it *that* way," I replied with a certain defensiveness soothed only by the bath and beer. "You could say as a fellow's interest in *Playboy* magazine dims, his interest in serving nature grows."

She still looked skeptical. "Well, nature boy, can I get you anything else to sooth those weary bones?"

"Another Sam Adams, perhaps. And, oh — could you hand me that copy of the Victoria's Secret catalog? I care more than ever about the birds and the bees and the flowers and the trees."

And you know the rest.

Contact editor Jim Dodson at jim@saltmagazinenc.com

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SaltWorks

Banjo Lovers

If you happen to be kayaking along the fabled Cape Fear River on Thursday, March 27, you'll want to paddle faster — and straight toward UNCW's Kenan Auditorium — when you hear bluegrass power couple Béla Fleck and Abigail Washburn making sweet, folksy music together for a don't-miss-it duet that starts at 8 p.m. Two banjos and one ethereal voice (Washburn's) — exactly what you might expect when you mix Fleck's riveting, three-finger picking style with what *The New York Times* describes as "Appalachia and folk-pop with tinges of Asia and Bruce Springsteen." Tickets: $25–35. Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 962-3500. Info: www.uncw.edu/arts. Listen: www.belafleck.com; www.abigailwashburn.com.

Funny Girl

Comedian Lizz Winstead, co-creator of *The Daily Show*, will entertain guests at the annual Operation Hibiscus Luncheon and the first annual Hibiscus After Dark Dinner on Thursday, March 20, at the Blockade Runner. Hibiscus events provide opportunities for Planned Parenthood supporters to learn more about the health care, education and advocacy work happening within the organization. An added bonus: jokes that would make Jon Stewart blush. Individual tickets are limited. Lunch event is from 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. Dinner starts at 7 p.m. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wilmington. Information: Amanda Starkey at (919) 833-7526 or amanda.starkey@pphs.org.

See Spot Run

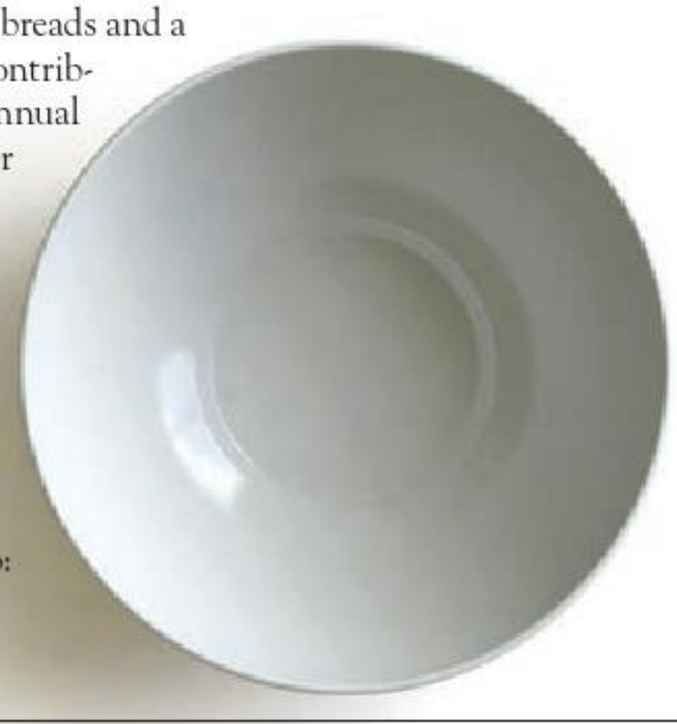
The sixth annual paws4people 5K, 10K and 1-mile fun walk will be held on Sunday, March 30, at 9 a.m. This year, the 10K course takes runners along the quiet roads and trails behind the campus of UNCW. Both runs include stretches of the Cross City Trail. Doggies: Please be on your best behavior. People: Bring bags to pick up your leashed pooch's you-know-what. The mission of paws4people foundation is to enhance the lives of students, seniors, and the seriously ill or disabled, by utilizing the "special powers" of canine companionship displayed by highly trained assistance dogs. Register before Race Day and get a T-shirt. UNCW's Fisher Student Center, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Register: p4pwilmington5k.com.

Made for TV

True fans of the locally filmed *Under the Dome* sci-fi television series are still mulling over the season finale, making summer — that's when the 13-episode second season is scheduled to air — seem like light years away. Here's a welcome distraction: March 17–28, art work from the show will be on display at the Wilma W. Daniels Gallery at Cape Fear Community College. A reception will be held on Friday, March 28, from 6–9 p.m. Spoiler alert: You will be dazzled. Gallery hours: 2–5 p.m. (Monday, Wednesday and Friday); 1–5:30 p.m. (Tuesday). Wilma W. Daniels Gallery, 200 Hanover Street, Wilmington. Info: cfcc.edu/blogs/wilmagallery.

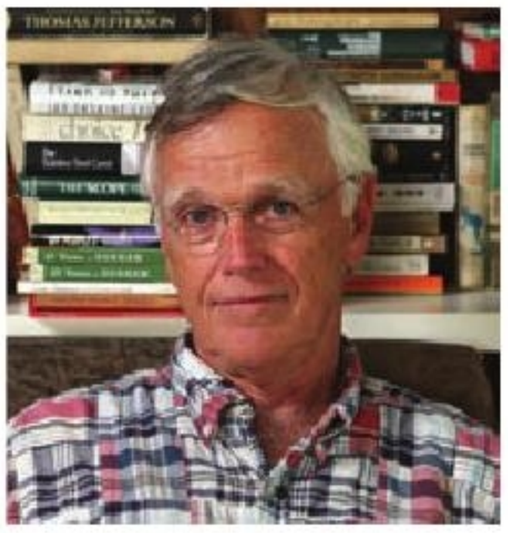
Soup for the Soul

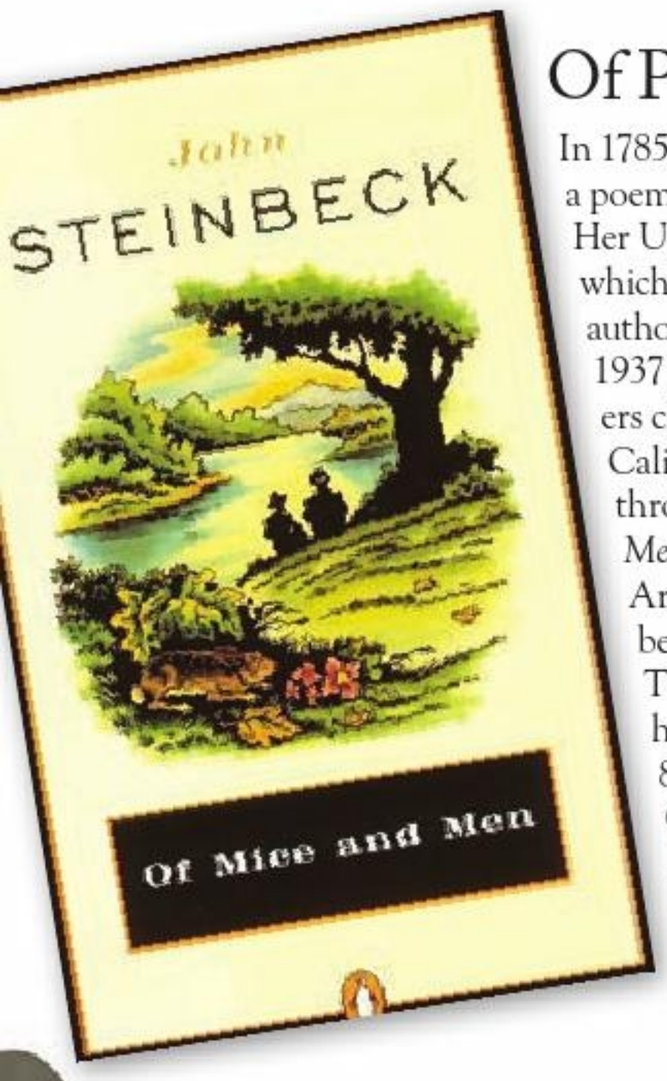
Gather round the table on Friday, March 14, 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., for a spread of savory soups and breads and a smorgasbord of hand-crafted soup bowls contributed by area potters. Empty Bowls is a bi-annual luncheon to benefit Good Shepherd Center and Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, local nonprofit organizations dedicated to providing meals and groceries to area residents in need. Guests go home with full bellies, warm hearts, and you-pick-it, one-of-a-kind wares. Chinese auction post lunch includes bowls made of materials other than clay. Tickets: $20. First Baptist Church Activity Center, Wilmington. Info: (910) 392-1551.



Words With Friends

On Saturday, March 8, Papadaddy Clyde Edgerton and pen pals Lee Smith, Jill McCorkle and Randall Kenan will be onstage at UNCW's Lumina Theater for Wilmington's first annual BooksmARTs event to benefit the Arts Council of Wilmington. Drawing from questions submitted by area book clubs, Edgerton will interview these great American writers about their work, writing rituals and creative inspirations. Find new fiction by Kenan on page 54 of this issue of *Salt*, and if you don't already have them in your home library, Smith's *Guests on Earth*, McCorkle's *Life After Life*, and Kenan's *The Fire This Time* are available at local bookshops. Admission: $25. For more information, visit www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.





Of Poems and Plays

In 1785, Scottish bard Robert Burns wrote a poem called "To a Mouse, on Turning Her Up in Her Nest with the Plough," from which Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning author John Steinbeck took the title for his 1937 novella about two hardscrabble drifters chasing their dreams in Depression-era California. On Thursday, March 20, through Sunday, March 23, *Of Mice and Men*, directed by Thalian Association Artistic Director Tom Briggs, will be performed on the Main Stage at Thalian Hall. The tale, of course, is as harrowing as the poem. Showtime: 8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday). Tickets: $15 (Thursday); $25–30. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: www.thalianhall.org.

Birds of a Feather

In this month's Excursions column, Virginia Holman shamelessly confesses that she and her husband have become so obsessed with bird watching – birding, true birders call it – that, well, see for yourself on page 38. Perhaps you can relate? Wild Bird and Garden and local guide company Mahanaim Adventures are teaming up for a kayaking birding tour at Eagle Island on Sunday, March 2, from 8–11:30 a.m. Kayakers (and birders) of all skill levels welcome. Cost: $45 (includes kayak equipment). Reservations required. Need more bird talk? Join James Abbott of the Coastal Plain Conservation Group on Saturday, March 8, for a free, informative program on swamp birds of the Cape Fear, and again on Saturday, March 29, to learn about swallow-tailed kites. Both programs are from 9:15–10:30 a.m. at Temptations Everyday Gourmet, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

Pink and Lacy

Last year, 2,400 participants laced up for the first annual Wilmington Race for the Cure and raised more than $250,000 to help fund health services for people living with breast cancer in North Carolina. This year, the event happens on Saturday, March 1, downtown. Race Day includes a competitive and recreational 5K run/walk and celebrates survivorship, honors those who have lost their battle against breast cancer, and raises funds and awareness for the fight against this life-threatening disease. If you're reading this after the race, it's not too late to help: Donations can be made through March 31. Information: www.komennctc.org/komen-race-for-the-cure.

A Pinch of Irish

On Sunday, March 9, 5 p.m., Chamber Music Wilmington presents Nova Scotia duo Chris Norman and David Greenberg on boxwood flute and violin. Norman, who makes his own boxwoods, has played the flute on more than forty recordings, including the Oscar-winning *Titanic* soundtrack. Greenberg, formerly of the famous baroque ensemble Tafelmusik, plays the fiddle in 18th-century Scottish style. Together, they bring to life the sprightly dance music of Maritime Canada, Scotland and Ireland. Saint Thomas Preservation Hall, 208 Dock Street, Wilmington. Tickets: (910) 343-1079. Information: www.chambermusicwilmington.org.

Zumba Virgin

Shake it, fake it, just don't break it

By Ashley Wahl

What happens at Jellybeans Family Skate Center on Wednesday nights is difficult to explain. One minute, young mothers are discussing the woes of peanut allergies in a world of Reese's Puffs breakfast cereal, the next, they're gyrating in dizzying circles, whooping and shrieking like dance-crazed groupies. The gal in neon calls it Zumba.

* *

Once the overhead lights have been cut, women of every imaginable shape and age make their way to the center of the roller rink like a vortex of brightly colored spandex. Some quietly begin practicing sensual salsa steps, hip swings, shimmies and the mambo (think *Dirty Dancing*, log scene). Others ponder over probiotic yogurt brands. When she thinks nobody is watching, a 20-something takes a "selfie" before putting up her smartphone.

There are sixty-plus Babys, only three Johnny Castles. The gal in neon is called Wendy.

"Y'all ready to get your Zumba on?" Wendy asks.

The crowd responds with such fervent squeals and ululations that you'd think she was a pop star.

Next, Wendy asks if there are any newcomers.

Yep, one.

"Zumba virgin!" shouts a voice from the troupe. Judging by the yips, claps and giggles from the others, the expression is intended as a friendly welcome.

Before cranking up the Latin dance music, our neon leader offers guidance: "Shake it, fake it, don't break it."

In other words: Even if you don't know what you're doing, or what direction to do it in, keep wriggling around with a smile on your face. Just try not to hurt yourself in the process.

Despite the venue, roller skates aren't part of the equation.

* *

For Zumba virgins who haven't a clue what the Z-word actually is, try to imagine a total body workout that incorporates various Latin American dance styles for a choreographed cardio session that equates to an hour of non-stop aerobic exercise with a generous smattering of squats, lunges, jumps, high kicks, oblique twists and abdominal crunches thrown into the mix. But that's not what the neon people will tell you. They will tell you that Zumba is a fitness "party."

No matter which way you choose to look at it, you'll be flushed and hungry afterward.

Be warned, the neon people say. Zumba (i.e. "shaking it" with a roomful of people) is contagious.

* *

When Wendy begins thrusting and gyrating her hips to hypnotic songs like "Sexy Bam Bam" and "Jiggle It," the crowd responds with such fervent

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

squeals and ululations that, again, you'd think she was a pop star. Some "jiggle it" in perfect timing with her, but many are dancing to a slightly different beat. Look around, though, and discover that it doesn't matter. In this moment, every one feels like a pop star. They are cheering for each other. They are cheering for themselves.

When you look around, try not to hurt yourself in the process.

* *

Wendy, in fact, is not a pop star, although she is an incredible dancer. She also happens to look fabulous in neon. Her path to Zumba is as dizzying as her reggaeton dance moves:

Some "jiggle it" in perfect timing with her, but many are dancing to a slightly different beat.

After clogging competitively for several years (she started at age 9), Wendy joined the pom-pom squad in high school, dabbled in tap and jazz, then joined a hip-hop dance troupe in her 20s.

"Our dance team went on to compete on MTV's *Lip Service* [game show] in 1992 in New York City and won it," she says.

When marriage happened, the dancing stopped. Until she was approached by someone at the Y five years ago where she used to teach Pilates.

Consider teaching Zumba, they told her.

"What I enjoy the most is seeing the smiles on people's faces when they are dancing," says Wendy.

And, as the spirited dance queen notes, Zumba makes people feel young and free.

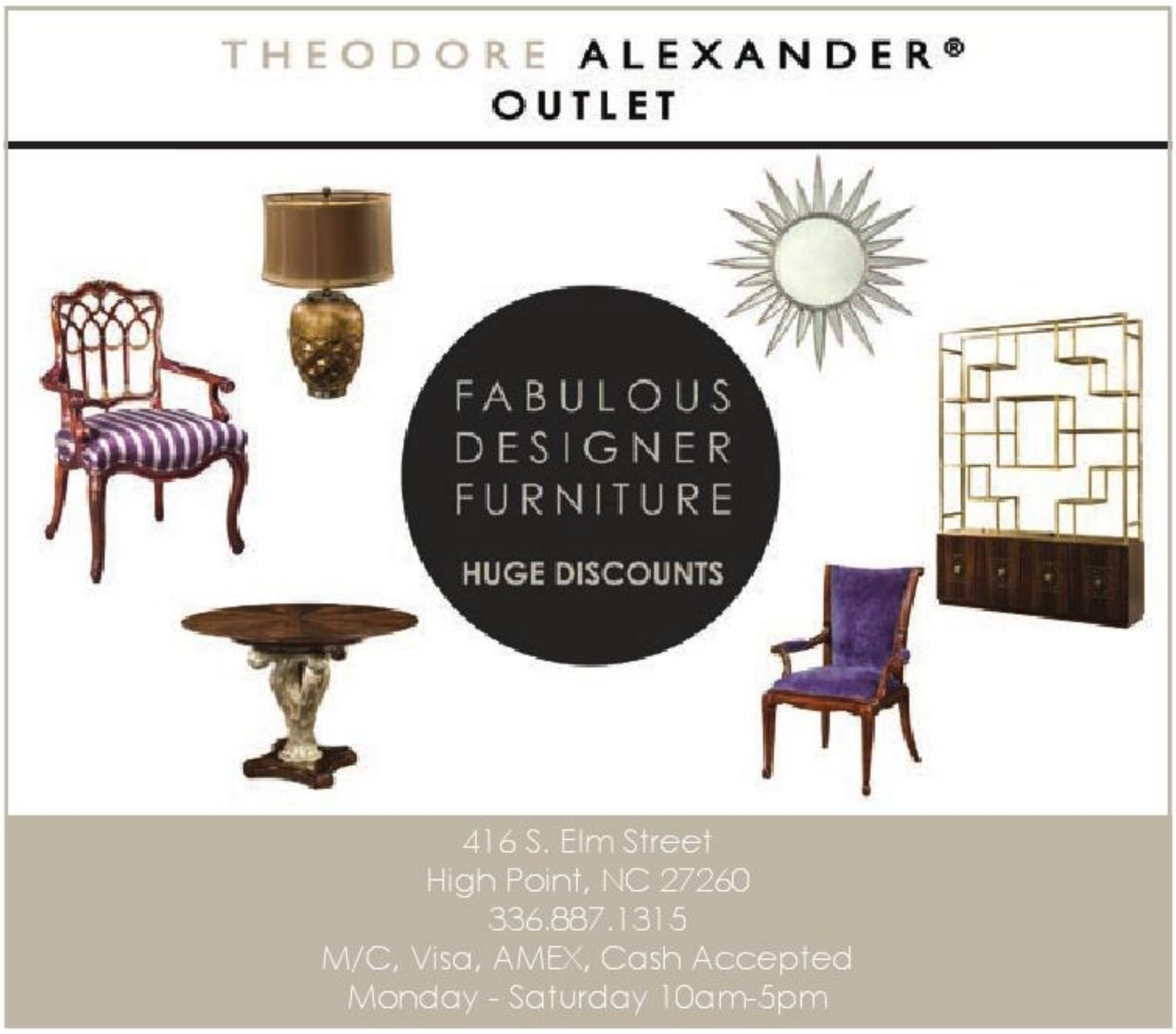
Her students are living proof.

"It's 'hokey pokey' time," says one woman on the way out the door.

Judging by the yips, claps and giggles, she's not talking about the dance you'd expect to see inside a family skating rink.

Jellybeans is located at 5216 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Information: skatejellybeans.net.

Front Street may be home base, but senior editor Ashley Wahl is prone to wander.



The Art of the Jester

When magician Michael Rosander performs his sleight of hand, the words and magic are real

By Gwenyfar Rohler

On a cool, sunny afternoon last November, I found a slightly befuddled jester standing on my father's front porch. "Where's the birthday boy?" he asked. I looked at his curled toe shoes and Elizabethan pumpkin pants. Wow, I thought. He just walked a block down Market Street dressed like that.

"He's inside," I responded. "We're excited you're here!"

"What's his name again?"

"Lloyd."

"Lloyd, Lloyd, right, right." The bells on his hat jingled when he nodded his head.

I ushered him into the living room where my frail and prematurely aged father was propped up in a chair. "Daddy, look who I found lurking on your porch!"

"Oh! Happy birthday, Lloyd!" the jester crowed, setting up his miniature briefcase on a nearby stool. For the next hour, Daddy, myself and Pam, my father's better half, were transported into the realm of birthday-themed magic tricks and illusions artfully presented by a talented actor with a convincing character and all tied together with a cohesive narrative. Aside from being impressed with the magic show, I was floored by the artistry and skill of the writing and performance.

Michael Rosander was our jester that day. He is the founder and director of No Sleeves Magic. The company name came from his first professional gig as a magician at a restaurant. In dress pants and a short-sleeved shirt, Rosander walked from table to table wowing customers with his tricks. Over and over people would ask, "How did you do that? You don't have sleeves!" Exactly. Since his arrival in the Port City as a college student in 2000, Rosander has had many opportunities to say "yes."

Could he dress up as a patriot for an elementary school rally?

"Yes."

Could he put together a magic show for a school of 600 kids in one month?

"Yes. I didn't have a show — I didn't have anything. But I like taking risks."

He called his best friend from high school, Myke Holmes. "Hey, I got us this magic show." The two had always been the class clowns and had somehow walked off with a life-sized rabbit costume from their high school. Holmes was to be Rosander's "Magic Experiment Gone Wrong," now transformed into a very large rabbit. "It's perfect," Rosander recalls saying to Holmes. "If anything goes wrong I can blame you." The premise owed a lot to Disney's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and the kids loved it. Afterward, the princi-

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

pal commented that it was the best school show they had — and that Rosander needed to charge more. "I liked both of those things." The kids couldn't stop talking about the great magic show, and Rosander started getting phone calls from parents looking to book birthday parties. It was the best free advertising anyone could ask for.

One of the keys to mis-direction, or keeping the audience's attention elsewhere while a magician palms the coin or switches the deck of cards, is the constant patter and chatter necessary to occupy the audience's mind. What I found so fascinating about Rosander was that his show didn't move from trick to trick with conversation about the trick as the major theme. He writes an entire stage show for characters. Their relationship with each other and each volunteer from the audience is the focus of the conversation. The tricks are fun, but they are secondary to what is going on between the people.

"That's always been my twist on the magic shows," Rosander says. "It's not me doing the magic, it's the magic happening to me." I completely believe that when I watch him pull "a chip" off my dad's shoulder and work through card tricks that end with the card in question appearing inside the remote control. This sweet and befuddled jester tries to guide the birthday boy through important life questions that somehow end with the presentation of a whoopee cushion. But maybe, if we stop to think about it, the whoopee cushion is the answer more often than we care to admit. Pam, who is a professional chemist, is certain that she isn't going to be fooled when our jester presents her with a roll of toilet paper complete with a face drawn on it.

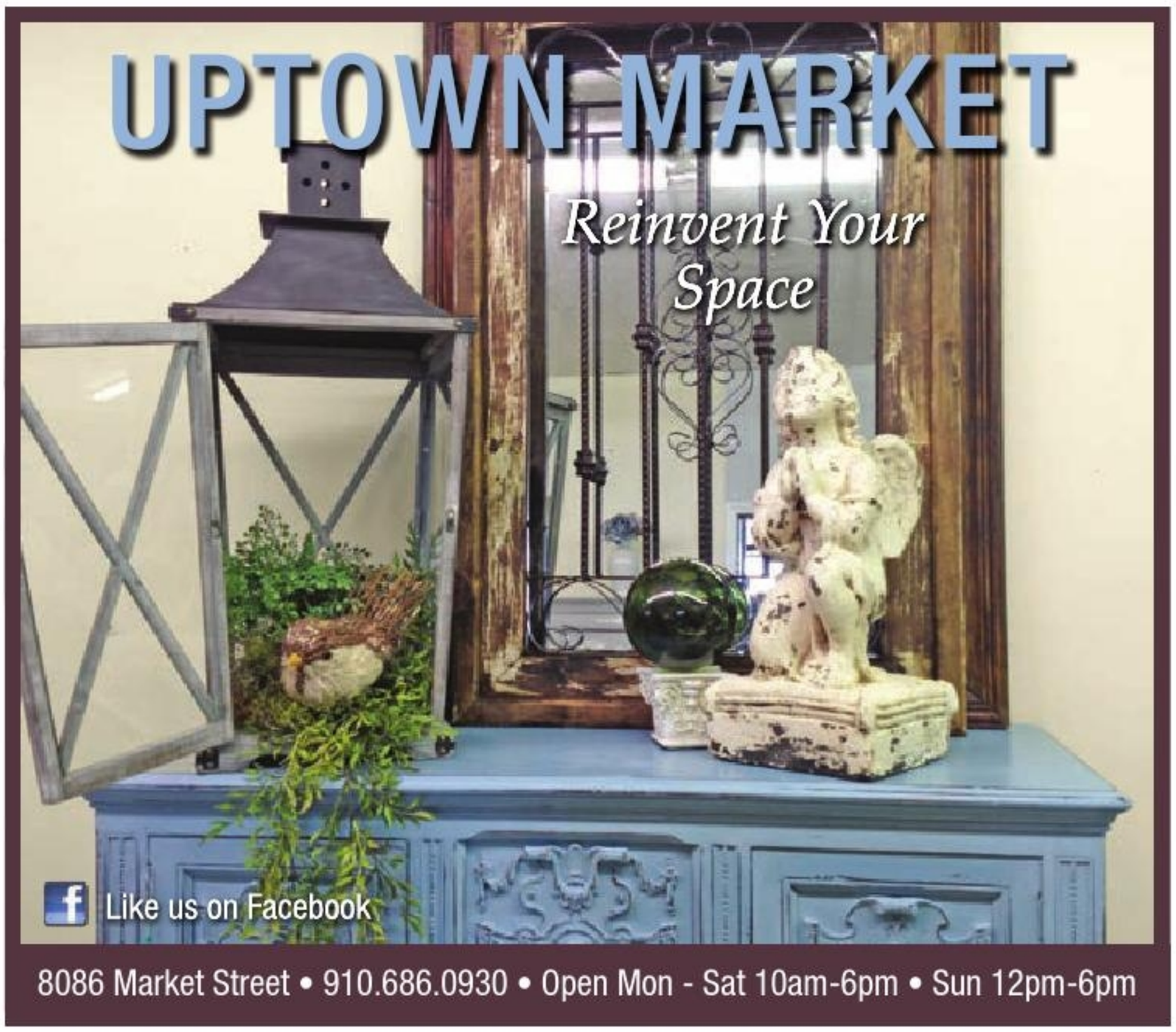
"This is my friend, Scott," Rosander says with a perfectly straight face. He asks Scott to greet Pam. Pam drops her face in her hand and just laughs.

After Rosander departs, my father's cheeks are flushed from laughing. "That's the best birthday I've had since I was a small child!" he exclaims. I utter a prayer of thanks. Given the state of his health, I worry that this birthday might be the last we celebrate together. If it is, at least it is filled with good memories.

Come to find out, Rosander's real story actually begins much earlier than "No Sleeves." It all started when a 5-year-old boy learned his first two magic tricks from his great-grandfather.

"When he passed away, I got those two magic tricks," Rosander smiles. "'The Coloring Book' and another trick called 'Color Vision.'" He pauses then adds, "I did 'Coloring Book' for your dad."

Gwenyfar Rohler fell in love with theater at Thalian Hall on her sixth birthday. She spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.



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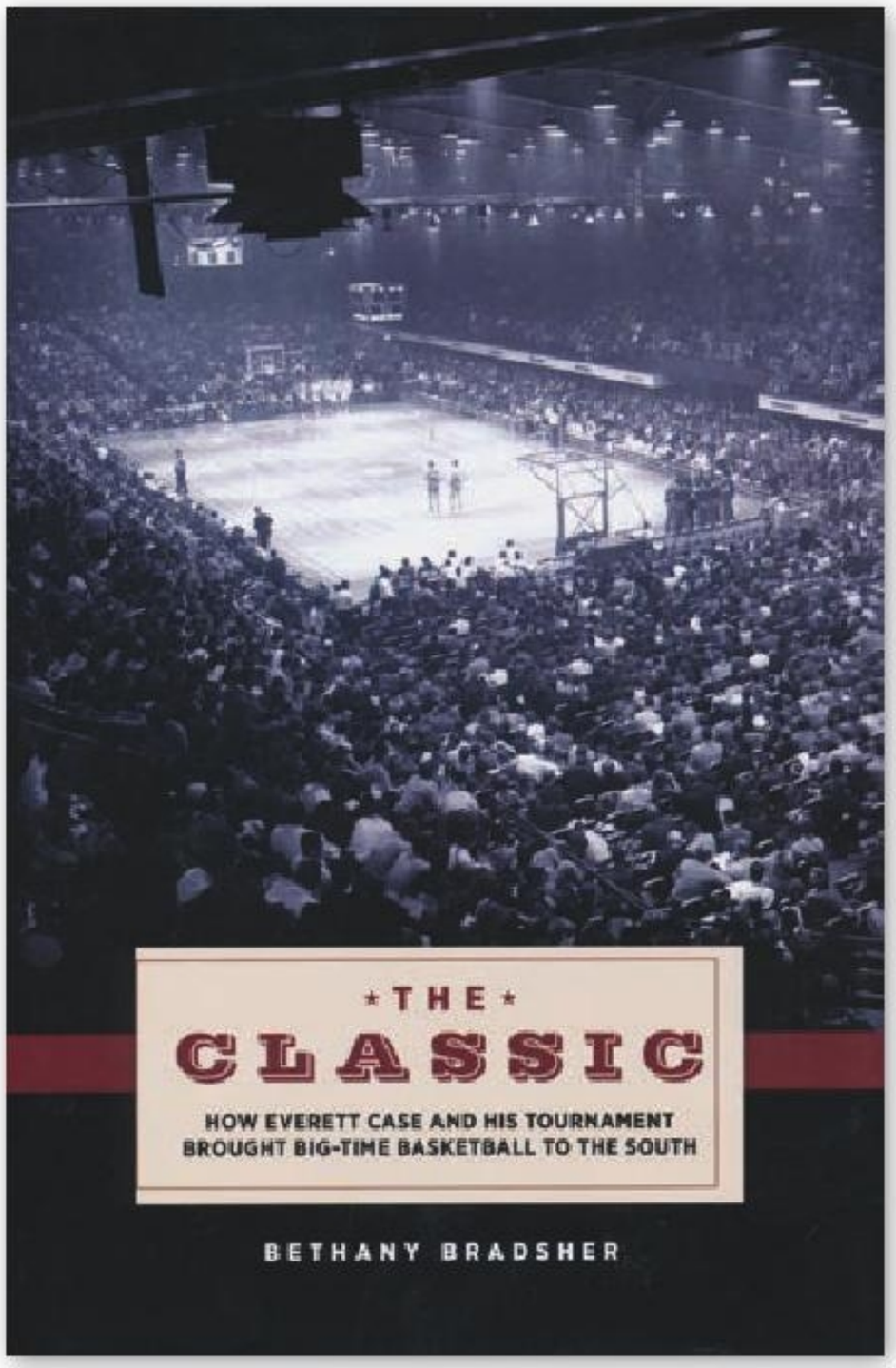
Dixie Madness

How the 12-year run of the legendary Dixie Classic basketball tournament shaped and fueled the growth of the game in the South – sewing the seeds of 'March Madness'



By Stephen E. Smith

You'd tune the old Philco to a local AM station and hear a gravelly voice emanating from the great void: "This is Ray Reeve reporting from the Dixie Classic for the Tobacco Sports Network . . . "

Not so many years ago such an announcement would have generated a level of excitement equal to, or even exceeding, the passions sparked by today's March Madness. If you're a rabid basketball fan, you should know — you have a responsibility to know — that the Dixie Classic is where it all began.

Bethany Bradsher's thoroughly researched and objectively written *The Classic: How Everett Case and His Tournament Brought Big-Time Basketball to the South* is the history of the popular post-Christmas basketball round robin which began in 1949 and ended in 1961 amid charges of point shaving and payoffs. Even if you're not particularly fond of basketball — such creatures do exist — Bradsher's history is compelling. And timely.

Younger readers should understand that in the late '40s, college sports in North Carolina generated little enthusiasm. UNC's "Choo-Choo" Justice and Duke coach Wallace Wade briefly attracted national attention, but basketball was an afterthought at state universities and private colleges. Then Case, an Indianan by birth and a former high school coach, took over the basketball program at North Carolina State University, and within five years he had transformed the culture.

Bradsher does an admirable job of offering up tournament stats and describing key games and plays, but *The Classic* is more than a mishmash of hairbreadth one-pointers and miraculous ball handling. During the twelve years the tournament enraptured basketball fans, the region was caught up in racial turmoil and the agonies of social change. Bradsher captures that anguish and still manages to convey the passion experienced by the fans who attended the tournament.

And what a remarkable cast of characters she has to work with — the natty Frank McGuire, a frantic Bones McKinney, Oscar "the Big O" Robertson, William "Billy" Packer, Jumpin' Johnny Green, and the Gray Fox himself, the best coaches and hoopsters of the time. Add to this heady mix a greedy bunch of mob-connected New York gamblers and you've got yourself a classic say-it-ain't-so story.

What Bradsher tells us is that Case knew what he was about. As soon as he arrived in Raleigh, he began recruiting players from his native Indiana — known among State fans as "Hoosier Hotshots" — and named them the "Red Terror." He dimmed the lights during the pregame introduction of his players, had his team warm up in red capes, and he cut down the nets after every win.

His vision for the Raleigh-based Classic was straightforward: have the best four teams in the region — UNC, Duke, Wake Forest and State — play in a tournament that included four exceptional out-of-state teams, and fill the new Reynolds Coliseum with cigarette smoke and screaming fans. To this end, he installed a Hammond organ and a row of lights dubbed the "noise meter" that seemed to react to the cheering of the crowd (the device was actually manipulated by a Coliseum employee). Within three years, the Classic was a roaring success, and every kid in the state was digging for tickets in his Christmas stocking.

But the tournament had a built-in dilemma: location. The Classic was held in the segregated South, and the introduction of black players, who began arriving in Raleigh as members of invited teams, elicited a vehement reaction from local fans. Tournament organizers had to wrestle with Jim Crow laws. When Mel Streeter, a black player for the University of Oregon, was scheduled to play at Reynolds, Roy Clogstone, State's chancellor, wrote to Oregon's athletic director suggesting that his team would have a much more enjoyable trip to North Carolina if Streeter remained on the Oregon campus. Oscar Robertson was refused accommodations at a local hotel, and when he was greeted at the Coliseum with racial epithets, something had to

give. And did. If contemporary college basketball is colorblind, the Dixie Classic helped make it so.

But it wasn't racism that brought down Case's creation; money killed the Classic. And Bradsher excels at laying out the subtle sequence of events and detailing the various enticements — most of them monetary — used by New York gamblers to lure players into the fix.

"The point spread," she writes, "created ethical gray areas for players drawn by the notion of making a quick fortune. It's easy to pull off and virtually impossible to detect, the gamblers would tell them. You don't have to lose the game — you only have to make sure that your team stays within the spread." Which is exactly what the guilty players did.

Basketball was Everett Case's life, and he knew his teams better than anyone. He sensed that something was amiss on the hardwood and reported his suspicions to authorities. In March 1961, *Sports Illustrated* published "The Facts About the Fixes," exposing the point-shaving scheme, which had also taken place at other colleges and universities. Only a few State and UNC players were involved, but it only took a few. William Friday, the president of the Consolidated University of North Carolina, stepped in and canceled the Dixie Classic forever: "When a kid's life is threatened — and I know it was threatened, and the district attorney did, or he wouldn't have been here — you had to eliminate the problem." Careers were ruined, the gamblers were prosecuted, and in some cases, the names of innocent players were sullied.

This much is certain: The publication of *The Classic* couldn't be more timely. Sports and related academic programs at UNC are under scrutiny, and money is more of a factor in college sports than ever before. Talented athletes opt to go pro without earning a degree. Football players at Northwestern University are pushing for unionization. Warren Buffett has offered $1 billion to anyone who can produce a perfect March Madness bracket for the NCAA's Men's College Basketball Tournament.

Where does this leave us? Bradsher quotes Friday: "The bad thing about the picture you see today is that it's not only bigger, it's worse. There's so much more money involved. We've turned our universities into entertainment centers . . . . And strong voices have got to rise up and say, 'No more of this. No more. Of. This.' And maybe it will start to right itself."

Don't bet on it.

Stephen E. Smith's most recent book of poems is A Short Report on the Fire at Woolworths. *He can be reached at travisses@hotmail.com.*

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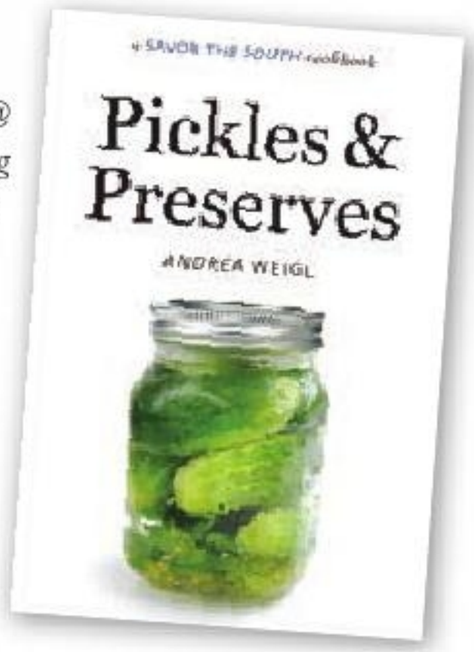
N.C. WRITER'S Notebook

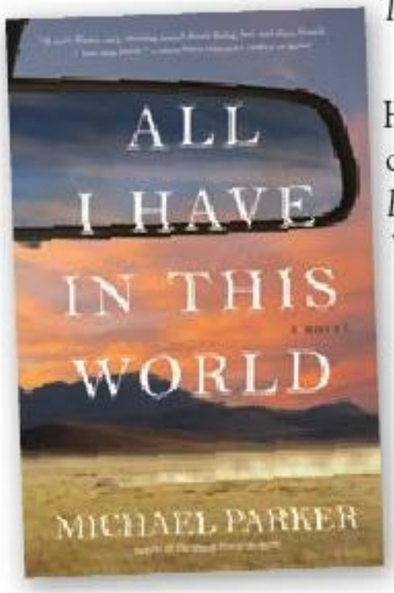
Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read.
— Groucho Marx

This Month's Readings

Barnes & Noble, Greensboro, CRM2795@bn.com: March 6, 7 p.m., Mike Axsom, *Making Memories Down South*; March 20, 7 p.m., Anne Barnhill, *Queen Elizabeth's Daughter*

The Country Bookshop, Southern Pines, kimberlyddaniels@gmail.com: March 15, 7 p.m., Andrea Weigl, *Pickles and Preserves*; March 17, 4:30 p.m., Erika Robuck, *Fallen Beauty*; March 23, 2 p.m., Anthony Abbott, *The Angel Dialogues*





Flyleaf Books, Chapel Hill, linnie@flyleafbooks.com: March 4, 8 p.m., Bruce Holsinger, *A Burnable Book*; March 25, 7 p.m., Michael Parker, *All I Have in This World*

Pomegranate Book Store, Wilmington, (910) 452-1107: March 29, 4 p.m., Lavonne Adams, *What Matters*

UNC Greensboro, Friends of the Library, March 26, 4 p.m., Georgann Eubanks' presentation: *Why are There so Many N.C. Writers?* Hodges Reading Room, Jackson Library

Many Returns

Our five-shamrock award goes to Jason Mott of Bolton. After earning a B.F.A. in fiction and an M.F.A. in poetry from UNC Wilmington, he published two successful books of poetry: *We Call This Thing Between Us Love* and ". . . *hide behind me* . . ." Mott gains inspiration from mythology, folklore and, gracious me, COMIC BOOKS. After he dreamed of his dead mother, an experience he found more comfortable than eerie, the novel *The Returned* evolved. No zombies here. Only people returning to help their loved ones. Are all the returnees good folk? Read the book to find out and watch *Resurrection*, the serial movie Brad Pitt's production company developed from the novel. Tune to ABC on March 9 for the first episode.

March Kudos

Poetry is the journal of a sea animal living on land, wanting to fly in the air.
— Carl Sandburg

Congratulations to Becky Gould Gibson of Winston-Salem. The North Carolina Poetry Society announced her manuscript, *Heading Home*, the winner of the Lena Shull Book Contest. Gibson will be honored on April Poetry Day at Catawba Valley Community College. This poet, frequently praising the work of others, calls Anthony (Tony) Abbott's *House of Cards* amazing.

Words can save us, especially if they are Tony Abbott's. — Lee Smith

The Angel Dialogues by Anthony (Tony) Abbott of Davidson debuts March 14. These skillfully crafted poems, describing angels fluttering through the poet's imagination, combine humor with keen insight. "If I were allowed to choose my angel, I might embrace Gacie," Fred Chappell says. "Solicitous, assured, understanding, cheeky (say what?), impudent (!), mischievous (?!), wiseacre (?!), she is the counselor who does not insist, the consoler who does not impinge; she is the One who will trust me when I cannot trust myself. . . . Thank you, Tony."

The emotional colors and complexities of the solitary life compel me. I imagine them seriously in my chapbook, Miss Havisham in Winter — by Mary Elizabeth Parker

This cycle of poems reflects on adjusting to the last season of one's life. A Greensboro writer, Parker has published extensively. Additionally, during eighteen years as chair of the Dana Awards, she has encouraged numerous writers with expert advice and monetary rewards. Several Dana winners have published books. For complete Dana Contest rules, go to danaawards.com.

Dates to Remember

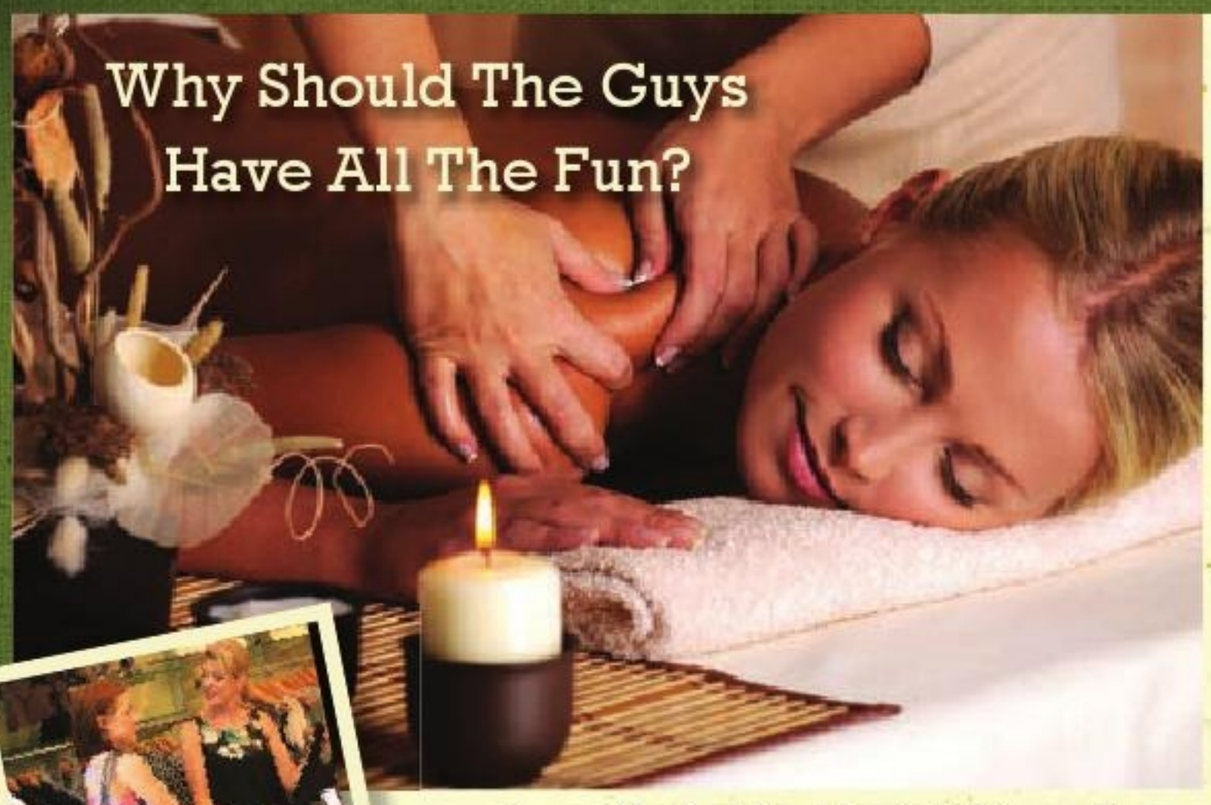
Celebrate St. Patrick's Day (3/17) by reading Irish verses. Wake Forest University Press (wfupress.wfu.edu), Winston-Salem, is "the major publisher of Irish poetry in North America." No leprechauns up to mischief here. Instead, scholarly angels pass out poems and candy to stressed-out students dreading exams.

On the first day of spring (3/20), get ready for summer magic. Register for a Writers-in-Residence Program offered to published N.C. writers by Weymouth Center in Southern Pines. Writers selected can stay up to two weeks to work on a project. For information and application, contact weymouthcenter@pinehurst.net. Be warned, some swear the ghost of Thomas Wolfe lurks in the halls of Weymouth. Wolfe, among many celebrated writers of the past century, visited this historical estate owned by James Boyd. Boyd, who loved fox hunting, penned five historical novels. "I'd rather ride than write," he confessed to friends.

Winners All

What is your favorite novel by a North Carolina writer? We will feature the book receiving most votes in the June column. Have you won writing awards or grants? If so, send details to sanredd@earthlink.net. Writer's Notebook would love to include you on our Winners List.

Greensboro writer Sandra Redding's first novel, Naomi Wise: A Cautionary Tale, *has just been published.*



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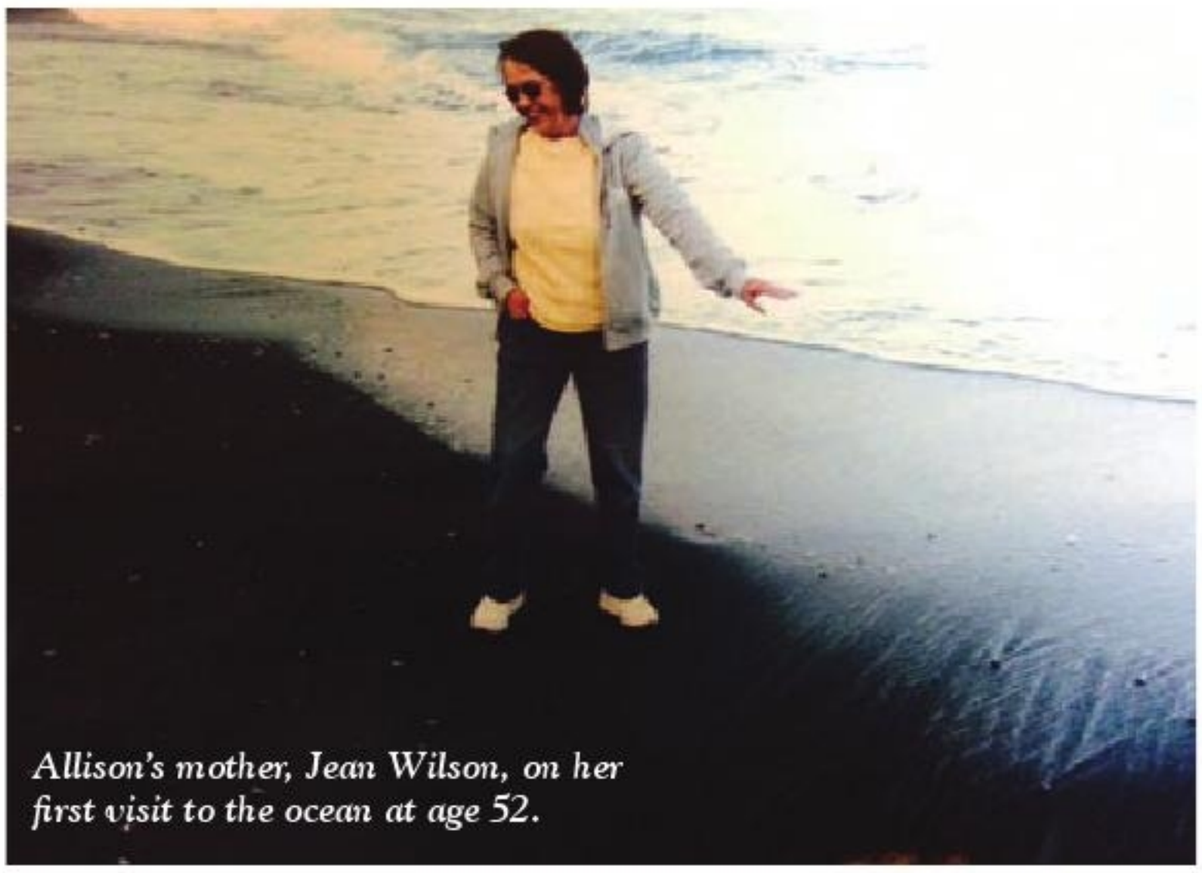
Getting to the Water

By Allison Zelasney

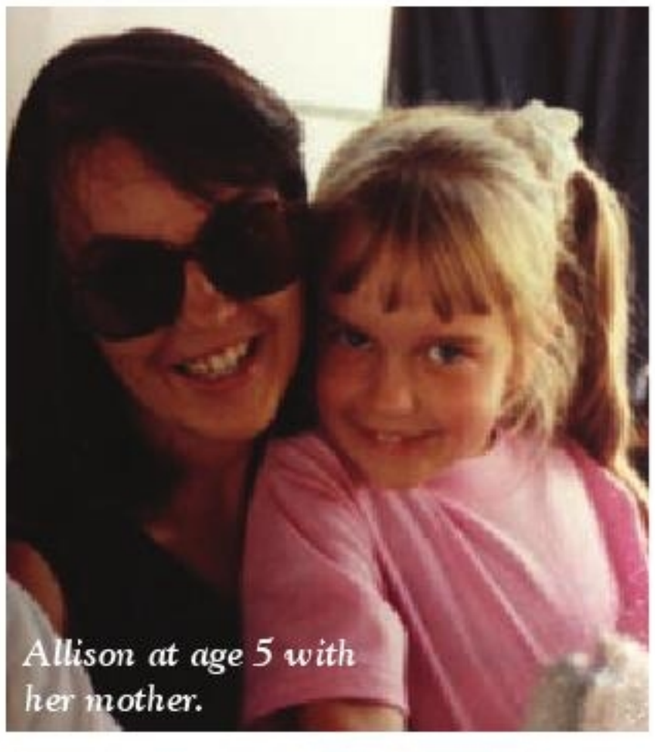
I feel a rebirth each time I stride into the cleansing waves of the Atlantic. Its salty tide caresses away the weight of yesterday and moves me to believe in the beauty of each moment. Yes, I believe I am in love with the ocean.



Allison's mother, Jean Wilson, on her first visit to the ocean at age 52.

I grew up fast and plainly on the plains of Nebraska. The ocean was a thing of postcards and movie star vacations. Our "oceans" were fields of corn and soybeans. Swimming was conducted in rivers and gravel pits. In the summers I raised many families of felines and taught spelling to an invisible lot of children. I clung close to my mom when she had a moment to relax and wandered the eighty acres of our farm when playmates were scarce and my three older brothers were doing whatever they could without their little sister. I took my summer trips to foreign states like Connecticut and Arizona through chapter books and was happiest the days I baked mud pies alongside my brothers as they constructed tree forts.

All hardships of childhood seemed incomparable to the holy fear of making friends when joining middle school, but that fear washed away to the fear of a boring life if the only things that mattered were impressing others and contorting my dreams to be like those who outranked me. And to tell the whole story, I had a running head start on my peers to understanding the gritty parts of life. My first memories are years spent in hospitals while my dad battled cancer until he passed away when I was 5. Afterward, my mom remarried a good but troubled man. The marriage lasted four years before enough was enough. I tell this part now not to take away from the gifts I had of a loving family and all the comforts others kindly gave to me. I was strengthened with the stark truth that life does go on.



Allison at age 5 with her mother.

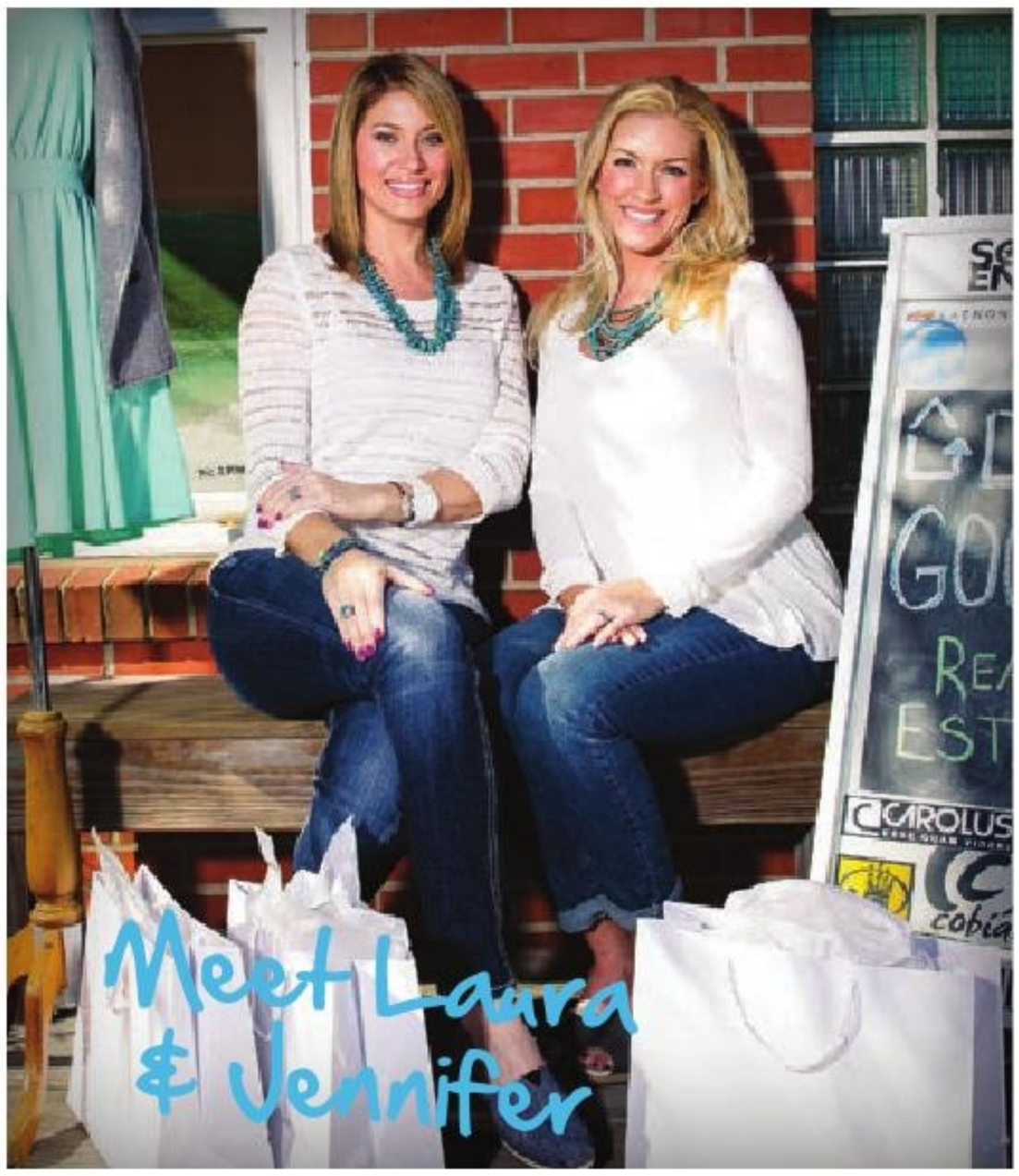
High school came and went. The biggest take-away was becoming closer to my brothers and a friend to my mom. College brought somersaults of finally feeling understood tumbled with the realization that no one can completely know another person. College included a brief, repeated love affair with the ocean. My bright eyes saw it first when I was 18; I had to return months later to make sure the lucid waves hadn't forgotten me. I hold tight to the moment when my mom looked at the ocean for the first time at age 52 and I witnessed the awe she felt for its majesty. I hopefully pronounced then and there that I would marry at that very spot where my mom saw the ocean.

Months went by and I flew across the Atlantic and lived for a short time near its water in a coastal town in England. Each time I stood by the Atlantic I felt like I was holding hands with a secret lover. Returning to Nebraska, I graduated from my academic life and tried to find my way back to the salty waters.

Without much time to decide what to do next, it came without asking. Mom joined my dad in the afterworld. She passed quickly. Fortunately I was able to carry out her one request: I scattered her ashes at the location where she saw the ocean for the first and only time. I never realized to what depth I had spent my landlocked life finding happiness and satisfaction from making her happy. For months after she passed, I continued writing letters to her and talking aloud as if she were still there. And then the lonely night came when a new self stumbled in — a truer, wobblier version of me. I saw myself as a fearless pirate of the amber waves of grain in the desolate plains. I was 22 years old, and I had the greatest set of brothers and many more incredible family members. But I was an adult; I was the only one who could lead me. I became my own heroine and antagonist, blundering through so many jobs and relationships and friends, and often felt mystified that trusting my gut made for a pile of mistakes.

Anchored in the middle of the United States, years passed like the tide with triumphant highs and low lows. At one of those melancholy tides, when the earth threatened to slide away, the ocean whispered again and again to me. I answered its calls, headed east, and moved to Wilmington without knowing anyone for hours in any direction. But I knew the ocean. Living minutes away from my love, the Atlantic, I can take a breath, slink into its waves and feel alive.

Allison Zelasney is a freelance writer working in the film and television industry. She moved to Wilmington in 2012 looking for an adventure and found many.



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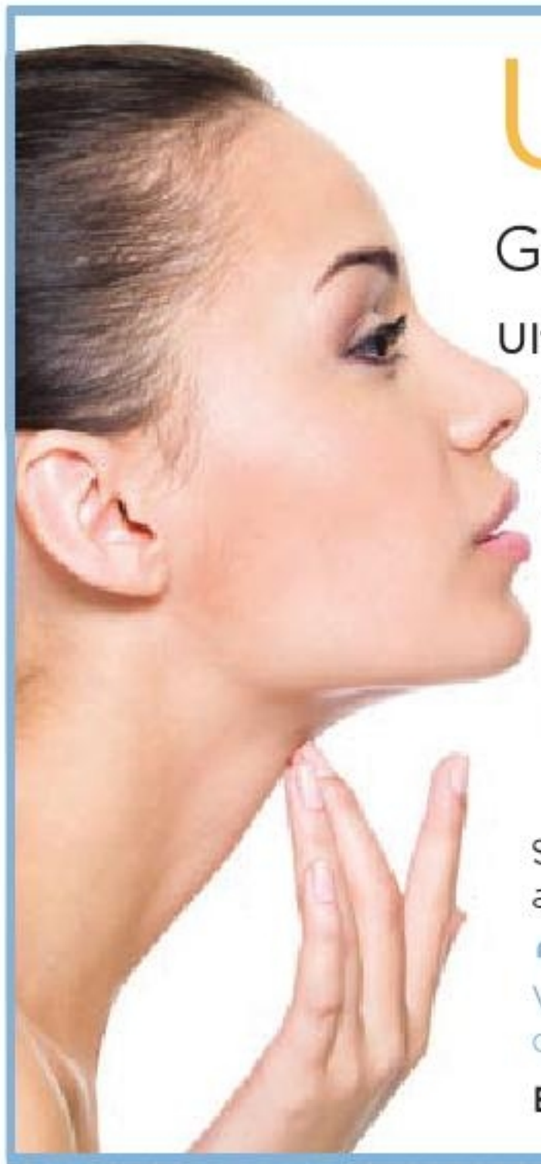

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Pewessive People

Left side or right, they're everywhere in the sight of the Almighty

By Ann Ipock

I'm perplexed.

What's up with little old ladies claiming — um, hogging, actually — their church pew? And don't act like you don't know what I'm talking about, either.

When we moved to Wilmington from Pawleys Island seven years ago, I found it to be the same way here. And though "pew hog" doesn't have a very ladylike connotation, neither do the antics that go along with it. It makes me wonder if they carry heavy purses for a reason.

Russell and I visited a new church on our second Sunday here, a Methodist church with a fairly nondescript interior. Scoping out a generalized favorite spot — right side, near the front — Russell followed me down the aisle, in order to claim *his* favorite spot. Yes, even men have church seat preferences. Russell likes to sit at the end of the pew. I like the inside so that I can do what I do best: talk!

On this particular visit, we stopped and slid into the pew and a middle-aged lady promptly tapped me on the shoulder and informed me, "You're in Elvira's pew!" Not seat, mind you, but *pew*! "Beg your pardon?" I asked. Heck, we didn't even hear "Are y'all new here? So glad to see you! Welcome!" before she admonished us. Of course I didn't dare sit down. We moved on and, thankfully, found a pew (with no guard) on the second try.

I think most people are creatures of habit. So while it makes sense to have a favorite seat, in church — of all places — you'd think people would be a little more flexible and gracious with visitors. Oh, but back to Elvira: I want you to know that she didn't even show up that Sunday. And worse yet, the next Sunday, the whole scenario played out *again* with Elvira's pew protector telling another couple the same dang story. Now I did notice that the bodyguard, I mean pew guard, was quite short in stature (but long on audacity), so maybe she was just trying to keep her field of vision clear. I honestly don't know. Since then we have joined another church, but it's still a pet peeve of mine to see someone challenge a newcomer, or anyone, for that matter.

But isn't it an odd sensation attending your church during another event, not a traditional Sunday service, e.g., wedding, funeral, music festival? This happened to us recently and the tables were turned — *our* pew at a wedding was taken. Sorry, I shouldn't say *our* pew because I am willing, being the good Christian gal that I am, to move up or back two pews, but that's about all the benevolence in me. Anyway, we took a seat on the left (bride's side, which was totally appropriate since we're personal friends with her) and we had a blast interacting with the left-siders! Old friends, Anne and Barney, cracked me up. I told mustached Barney that he'd better behave himself since I'm dangerous around mustaches. Perplexed, he wanted to hear more. I recounted my days as a dental hygienist when I got the mayor's mustache tangled in my polisher. He winced, then laughed. Jeanne and I discussed Sunday School and Connie told us a story about pew hierarchy.

I wonder if the people who save pews are related to the people who save multiple rows at dance recitals. These folks arrive an hour early; but more often than not, their friends never show up; or if they do, they're twenty minutes late and they're all Big Berthas or six-and-a-half-footers!)

Anyhow possessive pew hogs have no shortage of gumption, as if they own the wooden seats where they are planted — which, in fact, many do. In the eighteenth century, it was not uncommon to donate money to ensure pew ownership. My question is, does that give the family eternal rights to that pew? "This is my great-great grandmother, Lucille's, sister-in-law's third cousin's pew" doesn't cut it! How many generations back do they think it goes? Give it up, folks! Most churches (mine included) are trying to get people to come inside and stay, not shoo them away.

I thought I'd seen it all when it comes to pew fanatics, but dang if I didn't discover another category at the wedding. A dear friend and jokester named Kathy ran up to Russell and asked him if he could slump down during the service since she couldn't see — he's 6'2" and she's 5'4". So there you have it, folks: pew hogs and pew instructors. Same song, different verse! Now would y'all mind scooching down a wee bit?

Ann Ipock is an award-winning Southern author, humorist and speaker whose books include the Life is Short *series. She may be reached at amipock@ec.rr.com.*

Will Work for Bliss

Writing is a matter of discovering what fascinates you. So is life

By Jennifer Chapis

What does a woman who loves to teach and write do for work? This isn't a trick question. Writing professor felt like a job custom-designed in heaven just for me. So then why was I so dog-tired I could barely stand up in my polished oxfords?

For thirteen years, I helped some of the nation's most talented 20-somethings publish their first essays. I helped suicidal teens learn to love themselves. I helped an economics major realize he's a concert pianist. "Don't hide yourself," I told the classroom of wide eyes and bobbing pens. "Don't try to write like other authors. Be who you are because that's what you have to offer." I thought I was talking about writing, but I was talking about life. I was not only asking my students to fall in love with their work. I was asking myself to fall in love with mine.

With ten pounds of books confidently slung over my shoulder, I received a teaching award from the dean. Though on the inside, I felt like an alien impostor, hoping no one would spot my giant spacecraft hovering overhead. My wool suit made me itch, and my stiff neck ached so painfully I could barely turn my head. I was an artist pretending to be an academic. I felt depressed when a colleague launched into a friendly debate, contesting literary modernity in the 1930s, during a meeting I led. "Why is everyone rehearsing their dissertation?" I wondered. We were developing new lessons to help our students compose better essays. I wanted to engage the faculty in the physical craft of composition, not philosophize about literary theory. Afterward, I felt so worn out I longed for a nap. I thought my work was exhausting. I had no idea that I was exhausting myself by playing scholar.

When we conceal our true identity, we limit what our experiences can bring us and what experience we can offer others. Writing is a matter of discovering what fascinates you. Ideas begin with questions; they commence in the dark. Life is like this too. We grow as we go, figuring out who we are. We think we work for the paycheck, but there's a deeper motivation. Work yields important steps on the path to self-discovery. All my life, I was fearful of being me, of being different. I was afraid to see what I could really do. Although I didn't accept the challenge consciously, it's no coincidence I chose such a competitive program. Our director hailed from Harvard and West Point. He ran the writing department like boot camp for genius cadets. Basically, he was brilliant and expected everyone else to be the same. He triggered my insecurities.

I remember the first time I spoke up at a faculty meeting. I had some of the highest evaluations in the department, yet I was terrified to reveal my ideas because they strayed from our established pedagogy. Fear can be like a wrestler choking his own soul in a headlock. No sooner did the voice of inspiration cry "You can do it!" than the inner guard dog barked, "Don't be ridiculous. Just blend into the crowd, where it's safe." I thought it was the voice of reason telling me not to expose myself, but what was so reasonable about ignoring my instincts?

"What if we guided students in a meditation?" I heard the words exit my mouth and skid across the conference table in a series of echoing thuds. You'd think werewolves were lurking under our chairs. I was that afraid of being attacked. I looked out at my contemporaries, an assembly of intellectuals in navy blazers and tweed skirts. It was one of those long moments when the universe shows you to yourself — like watching your own face grow crimson on a movie screen. I wanted to rewind, to take it back. But it was too late. My question hovered.

"Meditation yields access to unconscious knowing," I continued, explaining the value behind a momentary departure from the critical mind. To my

surprise, everyone nodded and excitedly jotted notes. And as I spoke intuitively about how meditation frees emotional intelligence and amplifies creativity, my long-held worry finally softened. My shoulders broadened and the fist in my chest loosened its constricting grip.

All this time, the only person criticizing me was me. We each had unusual gifts to offer. My friend Adam taught masculinity in the mid-Victorian narrative, his personal approach to helping young essayists craft their skills. Me, I taught the writing process as a tool to uncover truth — to shine inner light out for an audience. I designed exercises to open the crown chakra, gateway to the higher self. I taught my undergraduates to write like monks enjoying a

I taught my undergraduates to write like monks enjoying a baseball game after a decade of inward observation . . .

baseball game after a decade of inward observation (What do you notice, and why is it exciting to you?). I taught with a bronze statuette of Saraswati, Hindu goddess of poetry and education, clandestinely perched on a windowsill, and a selenite crystal in my pocket . . . for inspiration. My classroom was a sanctuary for healing.

Our individual methods may have varied, but our program was united in a common goal: to expand minds. Probably everyone in those course development meetings felt like an oddball at times. I only needed to quit hiding, and start having fun. The more honestly I pursued my work, the more I understood my inner mission: I helped students and teachers alike reveal their unique talents. I was inspired by inspiring others. Our department chair appointed me to mentor new faculty. Maybe I didn't know myself yet, but looking back, I suspect he knew who I was when he hired me.

Jennifer Chapis is a writer, teacher and energy healer who leads Writing for Healing workshops in Wilmington. A New York University professor for more than a decade, her writing has appeared in The New Yorker, McSweeney's, BOMB, *and many other magazines. Find her at jennifer@alllovehealing.com.*

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The Lady in Hot Pink

When it comes to outfitting movies, Carey Jones and her crew can find anything from a live wolf to a certain part of the male anatomy. When it comes to finding lunch, she's a real cupcake

By Dana Sachs

If you saw the movie *We're the Millers*, filmed in southeastern North Carolina, you watched Jennifer Aniston and Jason Sudeikis smuggle a whole lot of "marijuana" from Mexico in an RV. But did you ever ask yourself where the filmmakers got that suspicious-looking green substance?

It's the magic of movie making. That so-called "weed" is actually marshmallow leaf, provided by a California company called Starwest Botanicals. "I bought *a lot* of fake pot for *We're the Millers*," said Carey Jones, purveyor of said weed. "I get it online."

Carey is president of the Wilmington-based Production Source, a company that assists television and film productions working on location in North Carolina. It's part of her job to score fake pot as well as vintage ball gowns, hand-sewn baseball uniforms, the occasional mustache, and technical items like special-use cameras that you can't find around here. When productions arrive in Wilmington, they hire companies like Carey's to manage local billing and either buy or rent products that aren't available in North Carolina. Because not just any garden-variety herb can convincingly stand in for contraband, her mission sometimes includes finding a source for that specialty plant that can.

Carey, a bright-eyed former actress, says, "If I'm not going 90 miles per hour, I get very bored." She brought that energy with her when we met for lunch at Hot Pink Cake Stand, a popular downtown bakery that recently expanded to a Monkey Junction location, where it serves lunch and dinner as well as sweets. I have to say that I was not optimistic about the prospect of finding anything charming in a part of town that's mostly famous as an intersection. And, in fact, Hot Pink Cake Stand's owner, Jody Carmichael, told me that she was initially hesitant about the area as well. Then she found out that Ash Aziz, proprietor of successful restaurants like Circa 1922 and Brasserie du Soleil, was opening a new location of Osteria Cicchetti (also known by its trendy nickname, "the O.C.") in Monkey Junction. "That made me more confident," Jody told me. "That guy does his homework."

Despite its location across a parking lot from Staples, the new restaurant and baked goods shop retains its downtown feel (a gray minimalist design) and its reputation for cuteness (a dessert list that includes not just cupcakes but also teeny tiny cupcakes, which are the same good thing, only less so). The new menu is small but intriguing. In addition to the sandwiches and salads that you might expect for lunch, it also offers a selection of crostini. We tried the roasted tomato and ricotta version, a combination whose succulence Carey attributed to the choice of ingredients. "I love the tanginess of the tomato," she said. "It's not sun-dried. It's just roasted, so you don't expect that much flavor."

We were equally happy with the rest of our lunch. The tomato soup was creamy, "like a bisque and very nice to have in winter," as Carey described it. The quinoa salad combined the nutty tasting grain with carrots, onions, cilantro and cashews in a light peanut sauce. "It's very Asian," said Carey, "and not too overpowering. Sometimes peanut sauce can be overpowering." When we tried the muffaletta, a New Orleans specialty that includes prosciutto, salami, ham and tapenade on a crispy baguette, Carey said, "I think that's my favorite. You get this lovely flavor without the olives taking over. You don't need anything else."

Of course, we did need something else. We needed some of those itsy-bitsy cupcakes. We tried salted caramel, chocolate, cookies and cream, and creamsicle. They were all delicious, but we did have a slight geographical disagreement about the distinctive orangey flavor in the one called Creamsicle. To me, it tasted just like the Push-Ups I ate growing up in Tennessee. Carey thought it

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

tasted like the Creamsicles she remembered from her childhood in Maryland. What's a Creamsicle?

Carey's compliments regarding the menu say a lot because she has high standards about food. Her husband, Wayne Jones, a film production transportation captain by profession, is a foodie at home, so she's used to excellent cooking. "He made me *coq au vin* last night," she said, which may make some readers slightly resentful.

The Joneses are just two of the thousands of film industry professionals who call Wilmington home. According to Carey, they're able to find work in this area in large part because of the success of North Carolina's film incentives, a set of tax credits that were put into effect in 2011 as a means of luring productions to

shoot in the state. Statistics kept by the Wilmington Film Commission show that between 2010 and 2011, for example, revenue from film production in Wilmington alone jumped from $44 million to $113 million.

Not surprisingly, Carey is a big proponent of extending these incentives, which are set to expire next year, and she considers it part of her professional mission to educate people on the benefits the incentives bring to our community and economy. For example, pointing to the "highly skilled, very experienced crew" in this region, she reminds us that film incentives keep these people working here in the state where they live. Even though a lot of the attention over the production of *Iron Man 3* in Wilmington focused on stars like Robert Downey, Jr., and Gwyneth Paltrow, it also brought work to the gaffers, best boys, camera assistants and other film professionals who live and pay taxes here, as well as affiliated businesses such as hotels, hardware stores, taxis, and restaurants.

"Without the incentives, the industry will go away," Carey told me. "Plenty of other states, like Georgia and Louisiana, have determined that revenue from the film industry is invaluable, and they go to great lengths to support it." In other words, she says, if North Carolina doesn't keep up with the competition, the film business will go to other states.

These days, though, with production booming in the area, Carey's job continues to take her on scavenger hunts to find the things her clients need.

"Have you ever failed?" I asked.

Carey looked at me firmly and shook her head. "I always get it."

"Getting it" has included everything from the bleached blonde wig Jennifer Aniston wore in *We're the Millers* to the robotic deer Carey acquired for *Tammy*, a film starring Melissa McCarthy. Apparently, you can do anything to a robotic deer without suffering complaints from the ASPCA.

Perhaps the widest array of odd stuff has come from the prop list of the television show *Eastbound and Down*. Though the production buys a large amount locally, some things just aren't available at Belk or A.C. Moore.

"Like what?"

"I brought in some wolves."

"Live wolves?"

"Yes."

"Anything else I should know about?"

She thought for a minute. "I bought them a penis."

I'm not sure which was more interesting, the idea of having to secure a penis

(I'm assuming that, unlike the wolves, it wasn't "live") or the imperturbable look on Carey's face as she told me about it. Purchasing male genitalia is, for her, part of a day's work.

"What do you think they did with it?" I asked, trying not to turn my own shade of hot pink.

"I'm not sure. It's for the upcoming season."

I must have been staring in shock because at that moment she did start to laugh. "Sometimes," she admitted, "you just have to giggle."

Hot Pink Cake Stand's new Monkey Junction location is open Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. You can find it at 5543 Carolina Beach Road (yes, across the parking lot from Staples). For more information, call (910) 799-9119 or visit hotpinkcakestand.com.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*

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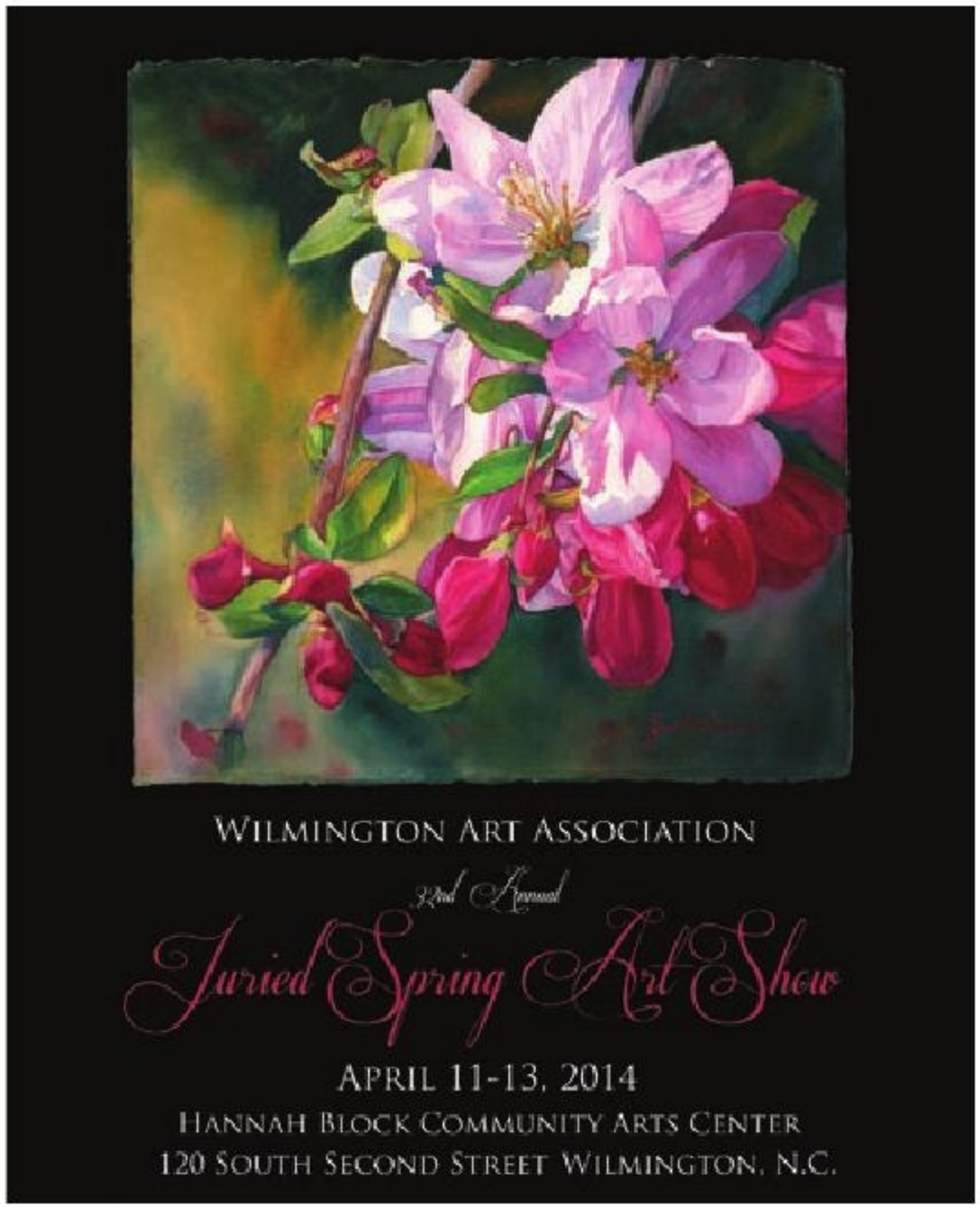

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The Martinez

The original form of the classic martini is a rustic and fine surprise

COURTESY OF RANSOM SPIRITS/PHOTOGRAPHY BY EYE OF THE LADY PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

By Frank Daniels III

No drink epitomizes the cocktail culture more than the martini. Glorious and sublime, the martini has a murky origin, and every claimant makes a good story.

The lore around the original martini is fascinating and became relevant recently when I discovered the artisanal gins from an Oregon company, Ransom Spirits (www.ransomspirits.com).

Ransom is both a winery and a distillery, and their gins are among the best I've tasted. Their traditional dry gin, Small's, is excellent, but it is their old style gin that is unique and worthy of reviving the original martini story and recipe.

The story begins in the mid-1800s when a just-flush gold miner descended from the Sierra Nevadas during the California Gold Rush to celebrate in the town of Martinez; he had his celebratory taste buds set on a bottle (or two) of Champagne, a worthy high roller's choice! The bar had none, but undeterred, the bartender concocted a special drink with gin and dry white wine. Apparently pleased, the miner took the recipe with him to San Francisco, where the bartender at the Occidental Hotel adapted it, substituting vermouth for the white wine. He called his cocktail the Martinez after its inspiration. (There are many other stories about the origins of the martini, and we'll cover those in another column.)

The gin of the time would have been Old Tom, a sweeter, heavier-bodied spirit than the dry gins that we have today.

Ransom's Old Tom Gin is made with exacting care to replicate the taste, aroma and body of these early gins, and I think you'll find that, historically accurate or not, its unique taste and range make it an excellent addition to your bar. This Old Tom Gin looks more like whiskey, but it tastes and smells like gin, like no other gin you've had. With such a robust gin as the base, this cocktail becomes a very different martini.

The vermouth available in the mid-1800s would have been Italian vermouth, what we call sweet or red vermouth.

The addition of cherry liqueur struck me as unnecessary and I've tried the Martinez with and without. Both work, but I was surprised to find a general preference for its inclusion.

The presence of orange bitters is another martini ingredient that has disappeared from the modern versions, but was a required one in versions of the cocktail up until the advent of vodka martinis and the general drying out of the drink that James Bond and the Smirnoff marketing machine wrought.

The proportions of the Martinez are also closer to the traditional measurements, ones that have been eschewed in martinis for modern tastes.

So this martini looks extremely different from the typical martini you may have had recently, and that difference in look carries through to its exceptional robust flavors.

This cocktail works well either shaken or stirred; shaken it takes on body similar to a Manhattan, and if you are serving several guests it looks exceedingly enticing in a martini pitcher, condensation beading around the meniscus level.

Makes me thirsty. Enjoy!

Martinez

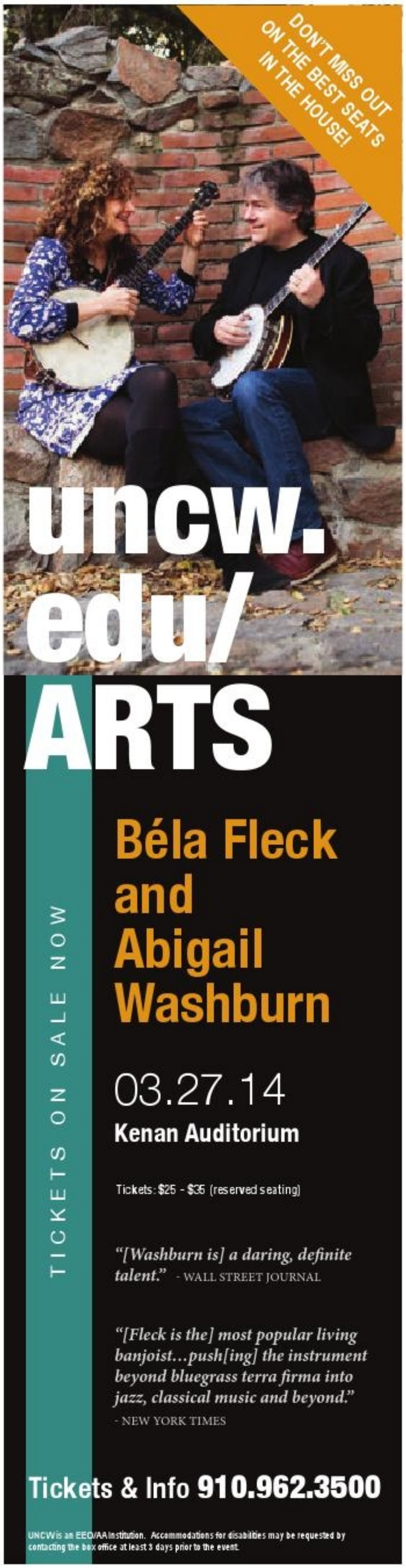
2 oz Ransom Old Tom Gin
1 oz Sweet vermouth
1 oz Maraschino liqueur
dash orange bitters
Long orange twist

Chill a cocktail glass with ice and some of the cherry liqueur to season the glass, then dump the mixture.

In an ice-filled cocktail shaker pour the gin, sweet vermouth and maraschino liqueur. Add a dash or so of orange bitters, shake vigorously and strain into the chilled cocktail glass.

Garnish with a long coil of orange twist.

Frank Daniels III is an editor and writer living in Nashville, Tennessee, who frequently visits Wilmington. Contact him at fdanielsiii@mac.com.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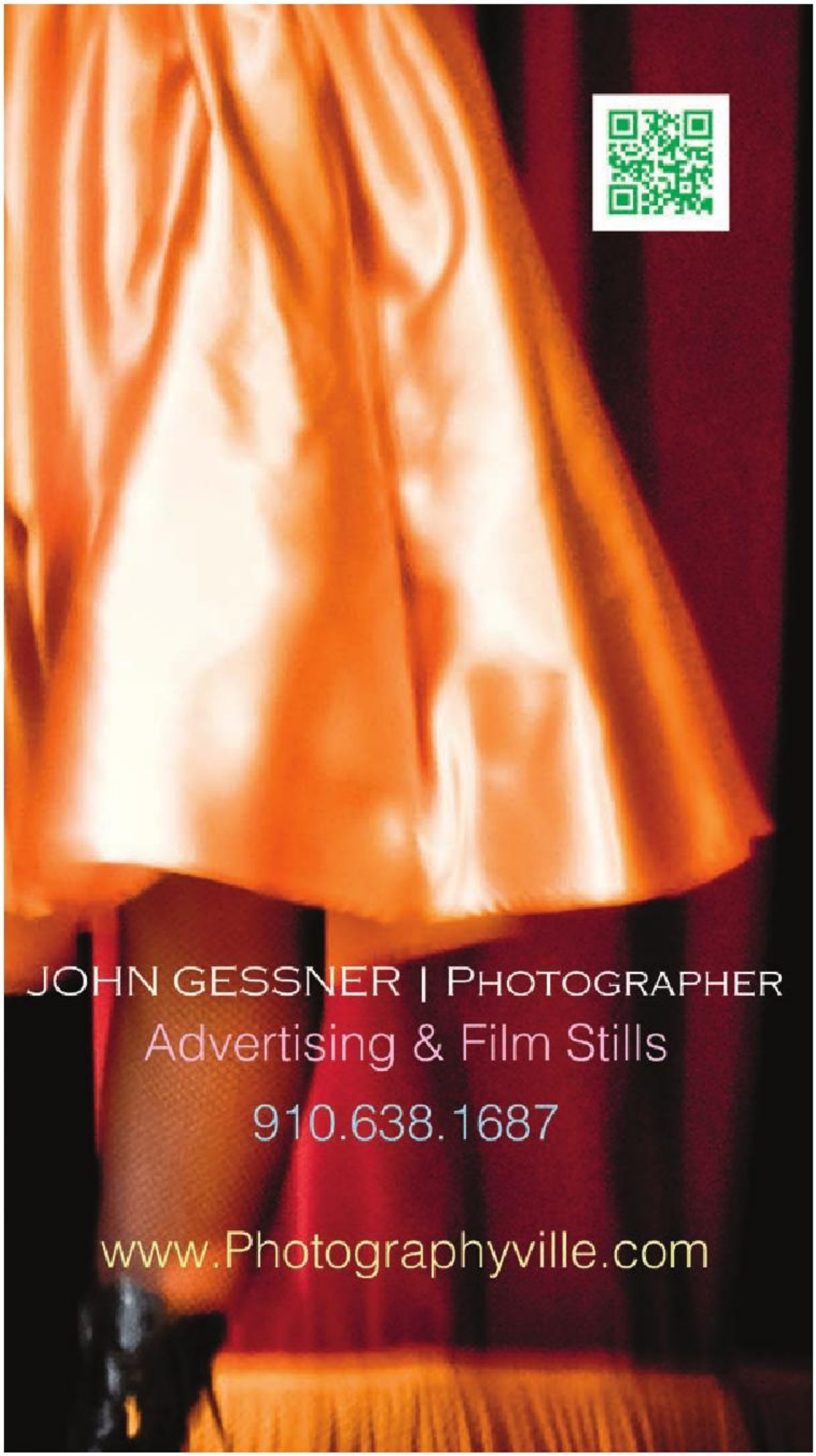
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Red Carpet Rosé

How Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt got it right

By Robyn James

Celebrity association with wine certainly isn't a new phenomenon; there are a great number of movie stars, athletes and musicians who lend their names and endorsements to wines just as any other products to boost sales.

How involved, if at all, these celebrities actually are in the winemaking process is a good question. An educated guess would be not much to none.

There is always an exception to the rule, and within the last year, the wine industry has found that exception with Chateâu Miraval.

As soon as I was told that Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie had crafted a wine from Provence I was the first skeptic.

As soon as I tasted the wine my skepticism melted.

Back in 2008, the Pitt-Jolie family was searching for a home in France where they could have privacy during the birth of their twins and then later turn the estate into a summer retreat. They fell in love with Chateâu Miraval, one of the finest wine estates in France that covers an entire valley in Provence and is located in Correns, the first organic village in France. They leased the property for three years while the original owners controlled the vineyards. Once they decided to purchase the property for an estimated $60 million, their interest in the vineyards spiked. They assumed control of the vineyards with the idea of making a world class Provençal rosé.

To my delight I read that they formed a partnership with the Perrin family from the Rhone region of France. Marc Perrin is their chief winemaker in charge of the operation.

The Perrins, who are legendary in the wine industry, are committed to everything organic and sustainable. They are the proprietors of Chateâu de Beaucastel, a property in Chateâuneuf-du-Pape that sets the bar for quality. Their wines have always been the yardstick for the Rhone region. Frankly, the Brangelinas are very fortunate to have them on board. They are the best.

And so they proved themselves because the very first vintage of Miraval dry rosé made the *Wine Spectator's* Top 100 Wines of the Year for 2013. That says Miraval is the best rosé of the year. On the release of their first vintage of Miraval rosé, in only a few hours they sold out of the 6,000 bottles they produced. Some of those bottles did make their way to The Wine Cellar, and I have to admit, they made their way to my house as well. I am a huge fan of dry Provençal rosé, and this was one of the best I have ever tried. It is a blend of cinsault, syrah, grenache and rolle.

The Wine Spectator described it as "Refined and elegant, offering pure and concentrated flavors of dried red berry, tangerine and melon. The focused finish features flint and spice notes, with a hint of cream. Drink now."

Rated 90 points, it is No. 84 in the Top 100 Wines Of The Year.

And so it seems that Miraval is on a roll. The 2013 vintage has just been released, sold out in six hours and was reviewed by Jane Anson of *Decanter Magazine* as "Confident from the off. There is no need to hawk for customers with an overly seductive blush; this is all about pale, barely-there pink. There is a lovely floral nose, soft fragrant roses, and from the first taste there is a delicate structure that deepens on the palate. But, as the French would say, '*il y a du vin*' – meaning that there is a sense of power alongside the elegance, a structure and a fresh acidity that gives the wine persistency, with a grip of minerality that gives a delicious mouthwatering finish. This marks a serious improvement on last year."

The gorgeous, historical Chateâu Miraval also shares a connection to the music industry. It was formerly owned by French jazz pianist Jacques Loussier, who installed a first class recording studio. Sting, Sade, Pink Floyd, The Gypsy Kings and The Cranberries have all recorded hits at Miraval. The estate produces another rosé named Pink Floyd.

Brad Pitt is reported to be very involved in the winemaking processes at Miraval. He and Angelina are wine lovers, particularly those of the Rhone region where the Perrin family has such a large presence. The wines are labeled Miraval, bottled by Jolie-Pitt & Perrin. They are committed to making the best wine they can and have been present at all of the blending sessions.

They just recently released a Miraval Blanc produced from the rolle grape, also known in Italy as vermentino.

I had the pleasure of tasting it and it had crisp acids, citrus-leaf aromatics, and pronounced minerality. It shows flavors of green apple and lime, heightened by refreshing acidity, good richness and medium body.

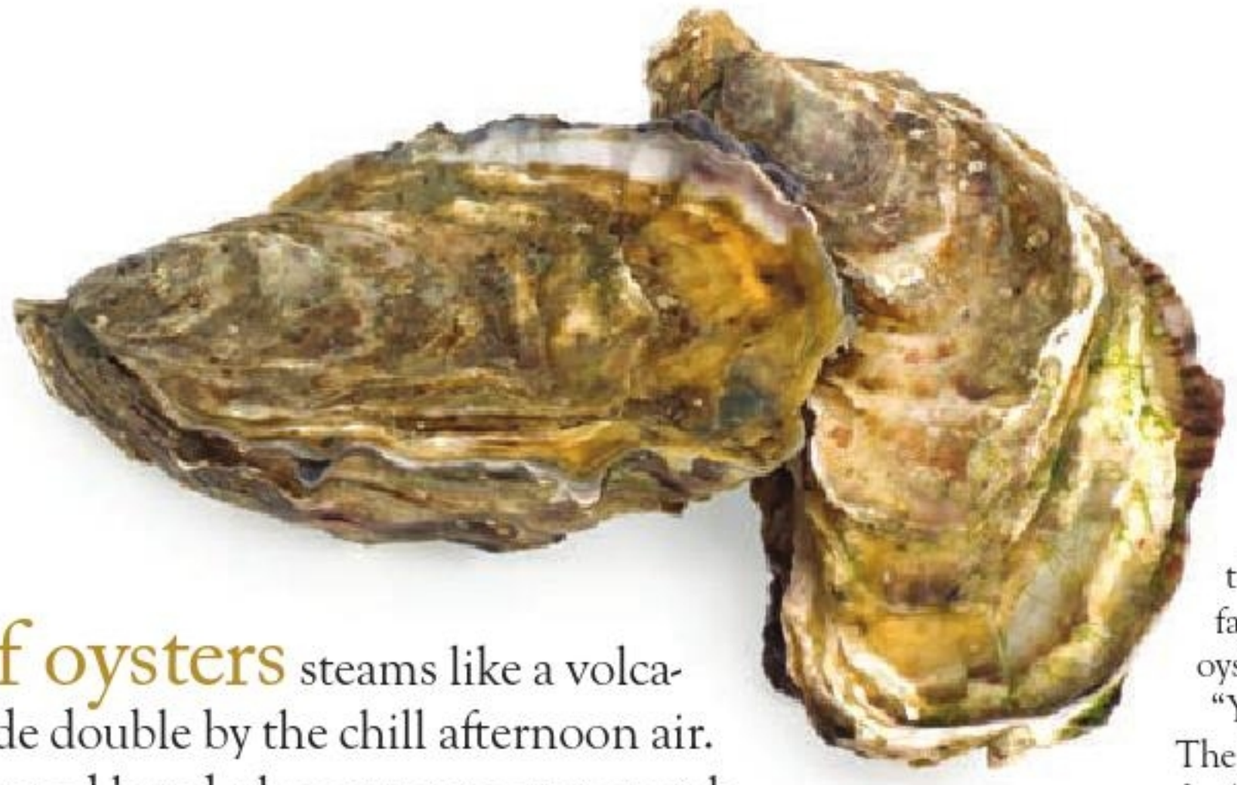
There are plans to produce a red wine that would mirror the Super Tuscans of Italy.

The spotlight is shining on Miraval's beautiful selections.

Certified Sommelier Robyn James has been in the retail and wholesale wine business for over 25 years. Contact her at winecellar@pinehurst.net.

The Once and Future Oyster Eater

In an increasingly diverse and welcome dining scene, what we eat is who we are



By Jason Frye

The pot of oysters steams like a volcano, its plume made double by the chill afternoon air. With a towel-wrapped hand, the oyster master snatches up the pot and upends it onto a newspaper-covered table. Oysters clatter out like a pile of hot river stones. Every one grabs one and tosses it from hand to hand until it cools enough to shuck.

The gathering around a pot of oysters — or better yet, a peck buried beneath layers of soaking wet burlap, happily roasting over an open fire — is a Southern food tradition. Like barbecue or the full-blown pig pickin', we here in North Carolina like to think that we invented these food-centered gatherings (we didn't, but, at least in the case of barbecue, we perfected them). Go north and you'll find clambakes and lobster boils; go south and it's fish fries and frogmore stew. Go anywhere around the world, or into any restaurant that serves ethnic food of any sort, and you'll find that once you break bread with people, it's a little easier to know them.

Which brings me back to this oyster roast. My friends and I, we're not all from North Carolina, and the few Tar Heels aren't even from Wilmington, but we do the best we can with the oyster knives. Some of us get bold, dip our hands into the bushel bag of raw oysters, and shuck a few for a little half-shell treat. Our experiences with raw oysters run the gamut from trying one for the first time at a ritzy New Year's Eve party where they were served with champagne mignonette to grabbing the first from the sounds of the Inner Banks and eating them as fresh and unadulterated as it gets. No matter how we came to this place — the oyster table — we're caught in a moment, sharing crackers and oysters, and learning something about our individual cultures and the collective culture into which we have plunged.

That's when the neighbor's kid appears.

He's 6, maybe 7, and he bellies up to the table like it's the only place in this world where he belongs. Before any of the fathers in our group can say a word, he grabs an oyster knife and an oyster.

"You need any — " one dad says.

The kid shakes his head, his too blond, too long mane waggles "no." Then, with practiced precision he presses the point, twists and pops the oyster open. He eats it, shucks another and eats that, then one more. Then he's off, plunging into the fray of kids on the other side of the yard.

What is the food culture in Wilmington? It's Southern, yes — I've been to more oyster roasts and pig pickin's than I can recall, and I must have eaten a row of collards — but the styles of Southern food you find here are wide and varied. You can dine on barbecue, Calabash-style fried seafood, country buffets, even nouveau Southern, and they all represent some different aspect of North Carolina's culture. Restaurants like Pembroke's, The Basics, Rx and Catch (to name just a few) approach traditional Southern foods, flavors, ingredients and preparations with everything from classic cast iron skillet-fried chicken to sous-vide pork belly with a spicy sauce straight out of Southeast Asia. But it's all become part of our cultural identity here.

With the growth of the Latino community in Wilmington, a number of taquerias and food trucks and restaurants have opened and serve actual traditional dishes of the nations, states and regions represented by the owners and diners. They ain't the fajita-quesadilla nacho Tex-Mex platters you're used to. These places are legit.

At La Güera, a Mexican eatery on Gordon Road, the quick patter of native Spanish speakers at nearly every table in the small dining room is strange to most of us who are used to hearing English as the primary language. Look at the menu — it's Spanish first, English translation second. This is an ethnic restaurant built for those of a similar culture, but one that is integrating itself with and welcomes the larger Wilmington community. The tacos are *muy auténtico* and my table of *güeros* was a rare sight; our order — bucho (beef neck), tripa (beef stomach) and lengua (beef tongue) tacos; enchiladas with green mole; and Mexican Cokes — surprised some of the regulars. I guess they expected what they usually see: Wilmingtonians play-

ing it safe and ordering a *pollo* taco.

The people in La Güera — from the owner to the cooks to the patrons — are adding their flavors to Wilmington's food traditions and helping our culture evolve.

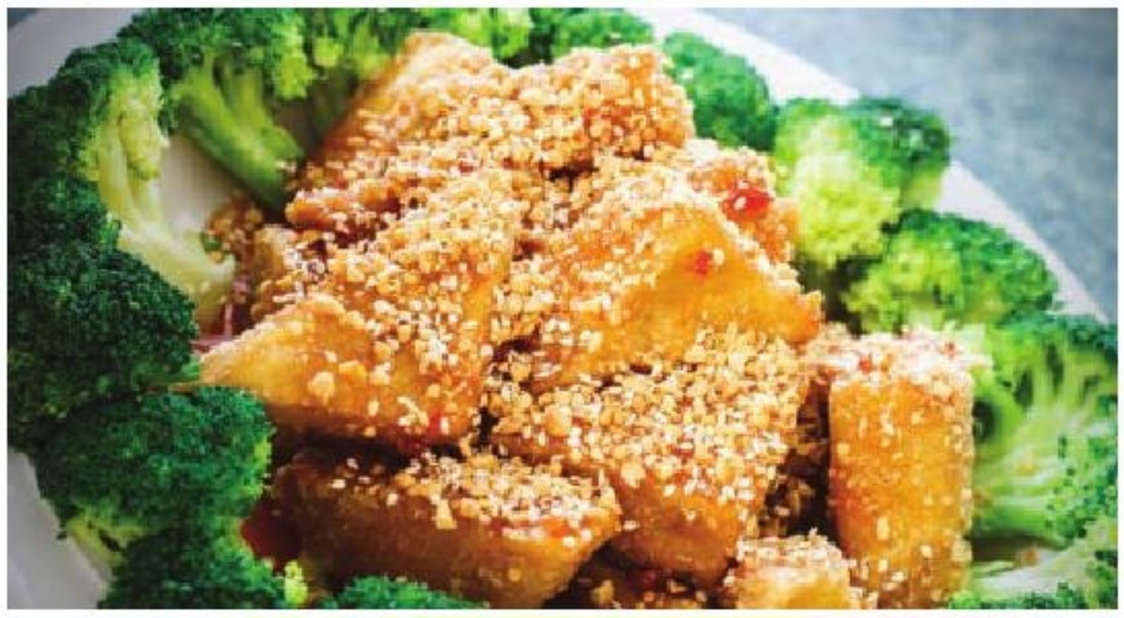
At Uncle Lim's Kitchen, a take-out Chinese joint in an unassuming strip mall on Independence Boulevard, Uncle Lim himself cooks up arguably the best Chinese and Malaysian food in town. Here, diners get a lesson in flavors and culture as many of the dishes are familiar, but the real treats are the dishes that speak to Uncle Lim's past. As Chinese Buddhists, Uncle Lim and his family go meatless twice a month as a way to cleanse the soul, and as such, they've developed soy-based meat substitutes that would fool even the most carnivorous of eaters. The kitchen rings with the singsong lilt of Chinese and if you ask, they'll teach you to pronounce your order.

Something about eating in La Güera or Uncle Lim's expands my own appreciation of the food here and challenges my notion of what flavors and ingredients can be part of my own Southernness. In many ways, this experience is not unlike those of Northern transplants at their first pig pickin' or oyster roast. The habits, traditions and flavors of the present collide and combine with those from the past and reveal something about the place you are, the people around you and the potential in front of you.

Which brings us back to that neighbor kid. To have developed a flair for oysters, to be so adept with an oyster knife, and to feel that he can sidle up to a table of men says a lot about who he is. It speaks to his (short) past, his present and his future. If he's this open to these experiences and foods at age 6, where will he be at 26? Someplace good, one imagines. His openness will influence his friends and their friends and new traditions will arise, familiar Southern flavors will continue to evolve, and Wilmington's tastes will be in good hands.

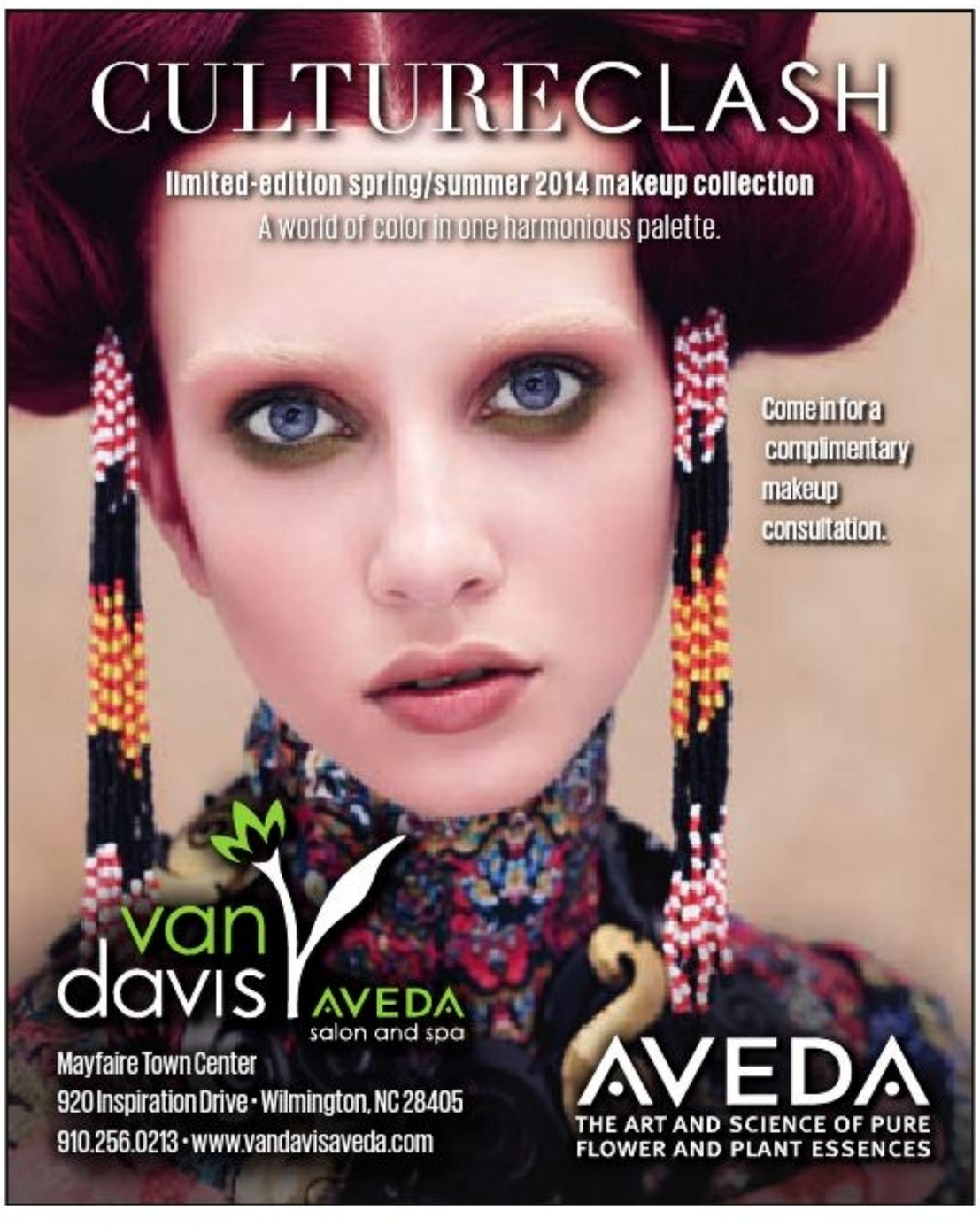
Jason Frye is a travel writer and author of two forthcoming travel guides. He's a barbecue judge, outdoor enthusiast, poet and lover of all things North Carolina.

Uncle Lim's Kitchen



La Güera

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK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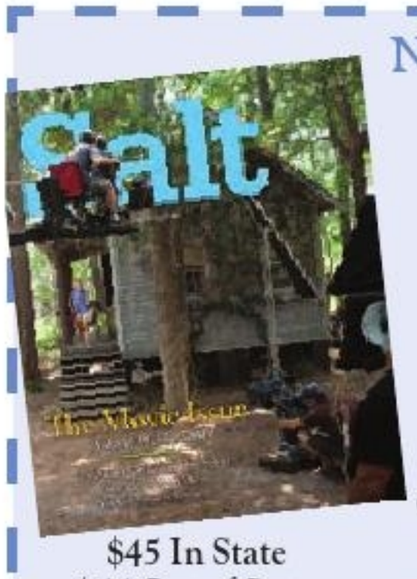

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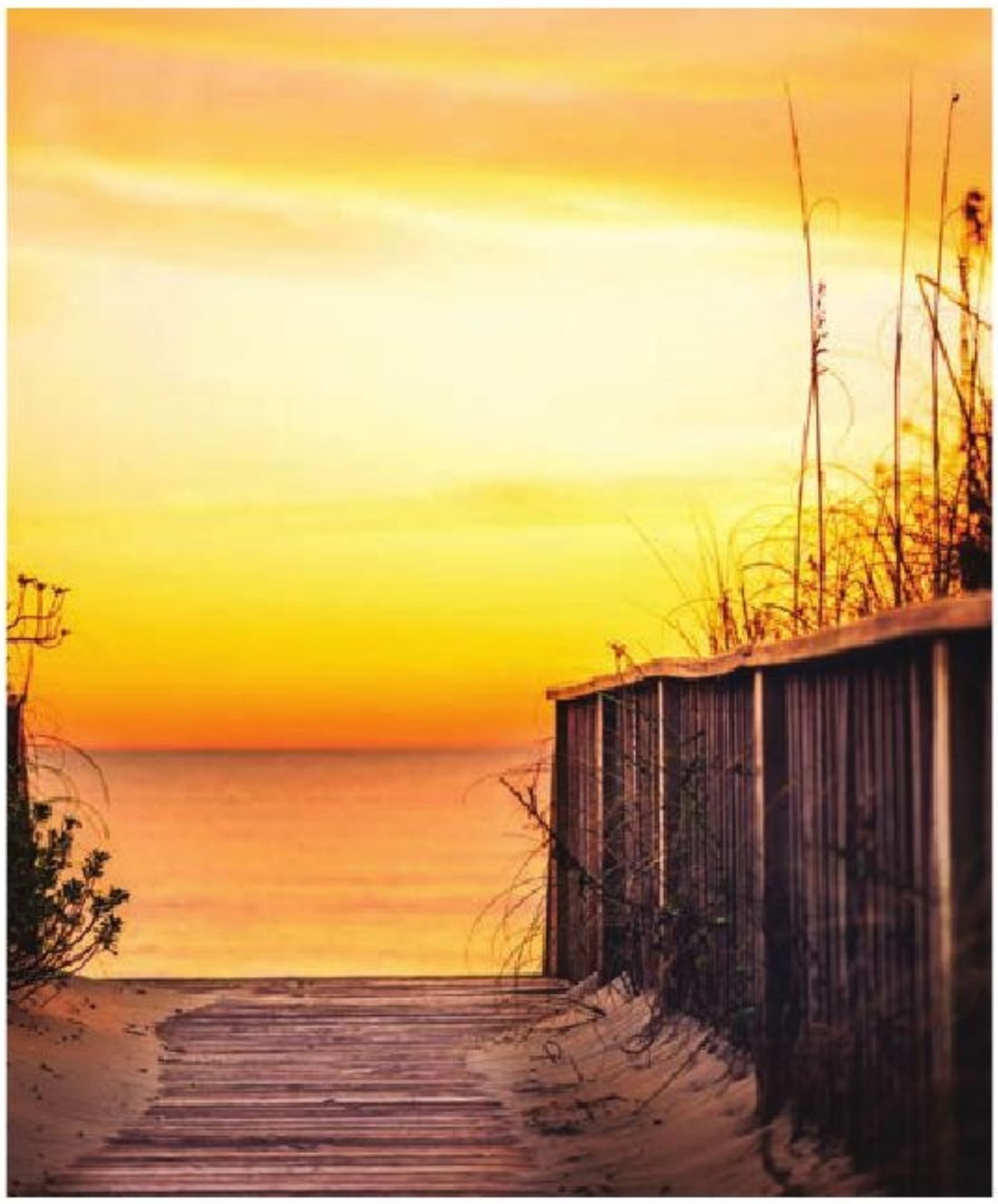
From the Mountains to the Sea

With a heart in two places



By Anne Barnhill

Never in my

wildest dreams did I imagine I would live at the beach. I grew up in wild, wonderful West (by God!) Virginia, living among the tangled mountain laurel and winding roads, right in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains. My family camped throughout my childhood, and through this close association with nature, I learned to delight in breathtaking views — the ridges stacking up in the distance, a river twisting and turning through the valleys, clouds descending to sit atop a peak. I remember the sweet smell of mountain soil and the clear, dry air. All these things, I loved.

Though we camped mostly in West Virginia's state parks, every once in a while, my father would decide it was time to head to the beach. He was a North Carolina boy who had grown up in the Piedmont of the Old North State and had fond memories of Carolina Beach, Topsail and the Outer Banks. So, off we'd go, our Chevy wagon loaded with what seemed to be all our earthly goods. After hours of negotiating curvy, two-lane roads, we'd finally hit Highway 52 South and ease our way into Winston-Salem, where my grandparents lived. From there, it was only a four-hour drive to the coast.

My father's love for the ocean was contagious.

"Can you smell it yet, Anne-Pan?" he'd say.

"Smell what?" I'd say.

"That salt air — we're almost there! No better smell in the world."

Once we'd set up camp, the first thing we'd do was walk over the sand, slipping and sliding as we approached the shore.

What a sight! — flat, dark green ocean stretching beyond imagination, blue sky that seemed gigantic, inflated by the hot, moist air, bigger and bigger and bigger. Dad would jump into the waves, motioning for me to join him while Mom claimed our space and spread our towels. I'd go in slowly, getting used to the slap of the waves against my legs, the roaring of the sea almost like music.

Dad taught me to catch a wave; body-surfing, he called it. And we caught a bunch, riding on top of the water, shells scraping our bellies as we struggled to beat the other, each trying to go as far on shore as possible.

I learned to love the beach, though I was never crazy about the extremely hot weather or the big bugs we'd see in the night air. But I never dreamed I'd live here. It has always been my dream to return to the mountains, where my spirit is nourished and I thrive.

But it was Dad (and Mom) who once again brought me to the North Carolina coast. My parents moved down here permanently about ten years ago. And, last summer, my husband and I joined them.

I hope I will adjust to the subtropical weather and come to feel about the beach as I do about the mountains. I've learned, if I try, I can squint up my eyes to see hills in the waves. And the live oaks rival any mountain hemlocks for beauty. I'm discovering the people are as warm as the weather. On moonlit nights, the pearly light shimmering on the water is as lovely as any breathtaking view from atop a ridge. I've taken shag lessons and will trade that in for clogging, exchanging bluegrass for beach music. I'll change my hiking boots for flip-flops and hope the heartbeat of the waves will speak to my own heart, claiming me. Perhaps my heart is big enough to hold both mountains and sea.

Anne Clinard Barnhill's novel, Queen Elizabeth's Daughter, *will be released from St. Martin's Press in March, 2014. She is the author of three other books along with a poetry chapbook.*

Vanishing Country Roads

Time and modern life have left them idle and empty.
But some are still here – leading to where we came from

By Bill Thompson

Over the years I have developed a fondness for old country roads. Unfortunately, the old dirt ones are disappearing and the opportunities to drive on the paved ones that wind through the back woods and fields are becoming less and less available. Seems like I have to rush from place to place now, anyhow. But that doesn't keep me from thinking about those country roads, writing about them from time to time, or asking people where I can find such wistful avenues of travel.

Weeds grow quickly on old farm roads. Nothing impedes their growth – no modern vehicle traffic, no pedestrians to stamp it down. The most frequent traffic is grizzled, mangy dogs, some in pursuit of romance, and some in packs scavenging for a meal.

Most people don't care where those roads lead since people with a destination have no reason to follow a road that goes to no particular place. But if we look carefully we can see ourselves along these roads. Our ancestors came down these roads, not only those pioneers from centuries ago but recent kin – grandparents and great-grandparents, the aunts and uncles we used to see at family reunions. We listened to their stories and saw in our minds what took place along those roads.

These were wagon roads long before the automobile and pickup truck were invented. The wagons came to little houses built by the hands of people who lived in them. No contractor was needed to build their home. The wagons brought their spartan furniture, often handmade – shuck-bottom chairs and three-legged stools, butter churns, beds with rope springs and tables made of three wide boards.

Most importantly, people traveled up and down those roads. The roads ran a long way from town. It may not seem like a great distance today, but if you had to walk or ride a wagon to get there, it could be a "fer piece."

If we take the time and make the effort to traverse these roads today, we see only the remnants of a life that was once bursting at the seams with agriculture. It was a life literally built from the ground up. The soil grew not only crops, but also a spirit of independence that was taken for granted until it was gone.

For most of North Carolina, particularly here in the eastern part of the state, tobacco was the heart of the economy. It could provide a decent income for families who didn't have a lot of land. For a long time the labor-intensive operation didn't lack for workers. Families were big and there were plenty of people available who needed the work, including the neighbors, most of which swapped labor, each family helping the other as needed.

Now those roads that saw the wagons and trucks loaded with neatly bundled piles of tobacco have little or no traffic. Much of society has said that the very item that sustained life for those farm families caused the death of others. So the roads are empty.

Those roads that provided access to a new life for those long-ago families are the same roads that so many of today's farm families travel as they leave their farms. Modern agriculture has no place for the small family farm as it used to be. The transition to mass pork and poultry operations owned by vast international agri-business firms has peaked and the other alternatives are few. Although they may be riding in their cars and trucks instead of walking or riding in a wagon, it's still a long way to town.

The floods and hurricanes of the past few years have washed away much of the soil that once nourished those fields of tobacco. Those roads have been flooded by storm water, some of the old bridges that once covered the little creeks and streams have been washed away, some replaced and some creating a terminus since nobody used the road anyway.

After a recent heavy storm, an old man stood on the porch of a country store and told this backroad traveler about the effect of the floods on his fields. He pointed out the devastation of his crops, the loss of his livestock and the destruction of property. Then he summed up the plight of the farmer, a situation not understood by people who had not traveled these vanishing country roads. "Heck, it don't matter. I couldn't make a livin' on it no more anyhow. Then again, I ain't never tried growing rice."

That's the kind of perseverance that has kept the Carolina farmer going down country roads all these years.

I'm reminded of a prayer I saw on a plaque at St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh, Scotland. It was written by Robert Louis Stevenson, but it could have been whispered by the farmers across the fields and woods of eastern North Carolina:

Give us grace and strength to forbear and persevere.
Give us courage and gaiety and the quiet mind,
Spare to us our friends, soften to us our enemies . . .

Bill Thompson is a speaker and author who lives just down the road, in nearby Hallsboro.

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Belted Kingfisher

The finest fisherman in the sky

By Susan Campbell

Often heard before they're seen, belted kingfishers are a year-round fixture across North Carolina. Since they need water for foraging and steep slopes for breeding, they're especially likely to be found along rivers, creeks and canals — of which there is no shortage in our area. Their long, rattling call is distinctive among our familiar birds.

One of three species of kingfisher found in the United States, the belted kingfisher's range is extensive, indeed spanning most of the continent. Breeding birds from Canada may migrate southward in search of open water in winter. And while a small percentage of the North American population winters in south Florida as well as Mexico, it is assumed that most local breeding birds simply wander to where the fishing is good in the colder months rather than making any real migratory flight in the fall.

Belted kingfishers are top-heavy birds with powdery gray plumage and a distinct, raggedy crest. They get their name from the swath of gray plumage across their breasts, and they are one of the few species in which the female has brighter plumage than the male. Females sport an additional band of chestnut feathers just below their gray "belt." Otherwise, these birds have a characteristic large head, thick neck, and a heavy, long, pointed bill. They are built for diving head first into the water. Often, they sit on a convenient perch above a creek or river, such as a branch or electric wire, making the plunge when they spot supper. They are also capable of hovering for short periods above potential food items (i.e., fish) before descending to make the catch. Kingfishers actually have a wide prey base, feeding on all sorts of aquatic organisms, but also taking other types of food, such as small birds and, if the opportunity arises, even berries.

For nesting, belted kingfishers require a steep slope. Although this is usually a river bank, they may also use man-made habitats such as tall dirt piles, assuming they are big enough and have a sheer drop on at least one side. This type of nesting substrate makes it difficult for terrestrial predators to reach the kingfisher's nest. The tunnel into the nest chamber is typically several feet long and is sloped upward, presumably to protect the nest from rising water alongside rivers and streams. The kingfisher's tunnel opening is large — at least three inches in diameter. The characteristic fishy aroma from recent droppings will separate their nesting location from the nests of other bank dwellers, such as bank or rough-winged swallow.

In spring, belted kingfisher pairs will search out nest sites. The male will probe the dirt in suitable spots until he finds the perfect location. Once he is satisfied with his choice, he will signal to the female by flying back and forth from her perch to the chosen location. After the burrow has been excavated, five to eight eggs will be incubated in the nest chamber for nearly a month. Once hatched, parents will tend to the young for (roughly) an additional month before fledging occurs. Unlike their parents, the kingfisher nestlings have highly acidic stomachs and will be able to digest scales, bones and other hard parts of what they are fed. By the time they leave the nest burrow, however, the young birds will regurgitate pellets made up of those typically indigestible parts.

So the next time you hear a loud rattling sound coming from on high, look up. You may just catch sight of one of these energetic, fast-flying fishers!

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted by email at susan@ncaves.com, or by calling (910) 949-3207.

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Eyes to the Sky

How 'bird' became an addictive verb

By Virginia Holman

As soon as we became empty nesters, my husband and I began to bird. We did not realize for several weeks that "bird" was both noun and addictive verb, in much the same way that "crack" is both verb and addictive noun. Once we began using the word "bird" as a verb, especially in reference to our leisure time activities, we had become birders.

During our pre-birding phase my husband and I didn't bird, we walked. My husband carried with him a pair of binoculars circa 1945, and I toted a point-and-shoot camera. We spent a lot of time with our faces tilted toward the sky. We squinted at shapes across wide marshes. We saw herons and ibis and egrets and hawks. We also saw yellow birds, and black birds, and brown birds. When we were still just walking, not birding, we called the birds simply pretty birds. "Oh, look," I'd say to my husband, "that's a pretty bird." "Look over there," he'd reply. "Now, there's a seriously pretty bird." I thought he had an exceptional eye.

After dinner, we'd upload the evening's photos to our computer. With a glass of wine in one hand and in the other a *Sibley Guide*, we tried to identify the birds I'd photographed. Then we posted the photos and the names of the birds on my husband's Facebook page. It was a lovely way to pass the evening.

Soon an old friend began responding on Facebook. I don't think we'd heard anything from him for thirty years. As soon as the first bird photos went online, he'd click like and commence commenting. He was a generous and kind mentor and we soon discovered that many of our "hawks" were known as merlins, harriers and peregrine falcons. We learned that many of the "pretty little birds" we saw were ruby-crowned kinglets, yellow-rumped warblers, and savannah sparrows. Before long my husband and I had entire dinner conversations about birds.

"Don't you think The Passerines sounds like a great all-girl a cappella group?"

"I think a good name for a death metal band would be Tyrant Flycatcher."

"Maybe I'd name the a cappella group The Phalaropes."

My husband concluded a death metal band needed a single word name, and settled on "Goatsucker."

It was hard to argue.

Soon it became apparent that to better understand what we were seeing, we'd need professional help. That's to say: We needed to meet other birders. Honestly, I was intimidated. I'd seen flocks of birders from time to time on our walks. They wore lots of olive and khaki colored clothing and carried spotting scopes and cameras the size of rocket launchers. I understood they made long lists of birds that they had seen or identified by sound. I just wanted to know more, and I feared these birders would know it all, and that I'd feel like a remedial student among professional ornithologists.

Perhaps that's the case in some places, but here in Wilmington, there are some great resources for beginning birders. The first is Jill Peleuses, the owner of Wild Bird Garden. Jill is a petite blonde young mother of two who came to Wilmington in 1999. She graduated from UNCW with an undergraduate degree in environmental studies and a master's in public administration/natural resource management.

Wild Bird Garden is the local hub for all things birdy in Wilmington. Jill runs monthly bird walks at Airlie Gardens with Matt Cooligan, Airlie's naturalist, teaches a continuing education class in UNCW's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) program, and runs birding and kayaking tours locally and to Florida with Manahaim Adventures. In addition, her store also hosts visits with notable naturalists such as Dr. James Parnell and biologist Carson Wood.

My first bird walk with Jill was along the northern rim of Greenfield Lake on a wet winter morning. Jill's tours run no matter what, and though I was a bit concerned about the weather (40 degrees, steady rain) on my first formal birding experience — "What am I thinking?" I asked myself the whole drive to the lake — the excursion was amazing. Jill told me the water birds would be active, and so they were. We saw coots, anhingas, redheaded ducks, black ducks, ruddy ducks, mallards, pied-billed grebes, geese, kingfishers, great blue herons and great egrets. My husband looked through a spotting scope for the first time and was enthralled. With modern optics (how much they've improved since WWII!)

PHOTOGRAPHS BY VIRGINIA HOLMAN

he could see so much, even in the dim morning light. We resolved to put some money aside each month so we could purchase a scope and two pairs of binoculars. Ah, I thought: So this is how it happens. This is how people become birding fanatics.

A week later we accompanied Jill and several other local birders for a bird survey at Greenfield Lake. I'm ashamed to admit I've lived in the area nearly ten years yet never gone around the entire lake. Birding the lake with a group of experienced birders was tremendous. We saw cedar waxwing, cooper's hawk, red-shouldered hawk, bald eagle, tufted titmouse, ruby-crowned kinglet, golden-crowned kinglet, hermit thrush, bluebird, yellow-bellied sapsucker, pileated woodpecker and red-bellied woodpecker, to name a few. That day, the group recorded seventy-six species of birds, all concentrated around this city lake.

"There's a lot of urban area around us," Jill told me, "and then this one wooded area and a large lake. The birds just funnel in here." Jill's enthusiasm is infectious, and it's easy to see why she's quickly become such a fixture in our area: She loves what she does and she genuinely wants to share it with others. In addition, she gently educates people to become "environmental stewards," so that more people will "help protect and conserve bird habitats and therefore the birds themselves. I get excited about opening up this whole new world of birds to people who may not have really noticed them before."

Greenfield Lake has an otherworldly quality that you don't expect to find in a city park. A number of areas looked like something out of a Louisiana bayou. The southern rim of the lake held a calm, sheltered area. Here the water was mottled with bright green spatterdock and the trees were laden with silvery Spanish moss. In an area of perhaps twenty square yards, there were twelve great white egrets, a blue heron, and a beautiful male anhinga, just showing the first signs of breeding plumage. I felt as if I had entered a scene from a 19th century painting by John James Audubon.

As for my suspicion and fear of other birders, that proved to be unfounded. The birders in our group were immensely helpful and kind, smart and funny. Occasionally someone would cast a glance over a shoulder and see what appeared to me to be a shadow in motion, and call out "hermit thrush!" or "common gallinule!" Each time this happened, I'd ask someone to help me, and the more experienced in our group were happy to help me see it as well. I'm sure there are some occasions where birders might become competitive, but I was pleased to discover an educational bird walk with the good folks of Wild Bird Garden offered newbies a truly warm welcome.

Also of interest to local birdwatchers are the monthly bird walks offered by Halyburton Park's Andy Fairbanks. Andy's an environmental educator, and one great thing about the bird tours he runs is that the $10 price tag includes transportation from the park. For this reason, all trips require preregistration.

We took a morning bird walk with Andy at Fort Anderson in Brunswick County.

For whatever reason, the little songbirds seemed to be in hiding from us the first part of the walk. Finally, Andy made a couple of calls in a small wooded area by a creek. All at once, at least fifteen birds emerged from the underbrush. I half expected a bluebird to land on his shoulder. I'd never wanted to learn bird calls until that moment. My husband was so impressed, he began listening to bird calls at night, trying to master identification by song.

A few nights ago he played a song I recognized from my childhood. I sat up in bed. "What is that? I know that song." It was haunting and comforting both.

"It's a bobwhite quail."

As a girl, bobwhite ran through our woods, though I almost never saw one. "Play it again," I said to my husband. Perhaps soon, on a bird walk, I could hear or see one again. I made a note to ask my new birding friends where to look.

Jill Peleuses
Wild Bird Garden
Information: (910) 343-6001; www.wildbirdgarden.com

Andy Fairbanks, Manager
Halyburton Park, 4099 South 17th Street, Wilmington
Information: (910) 341-0075; www.halyburtonpark.com

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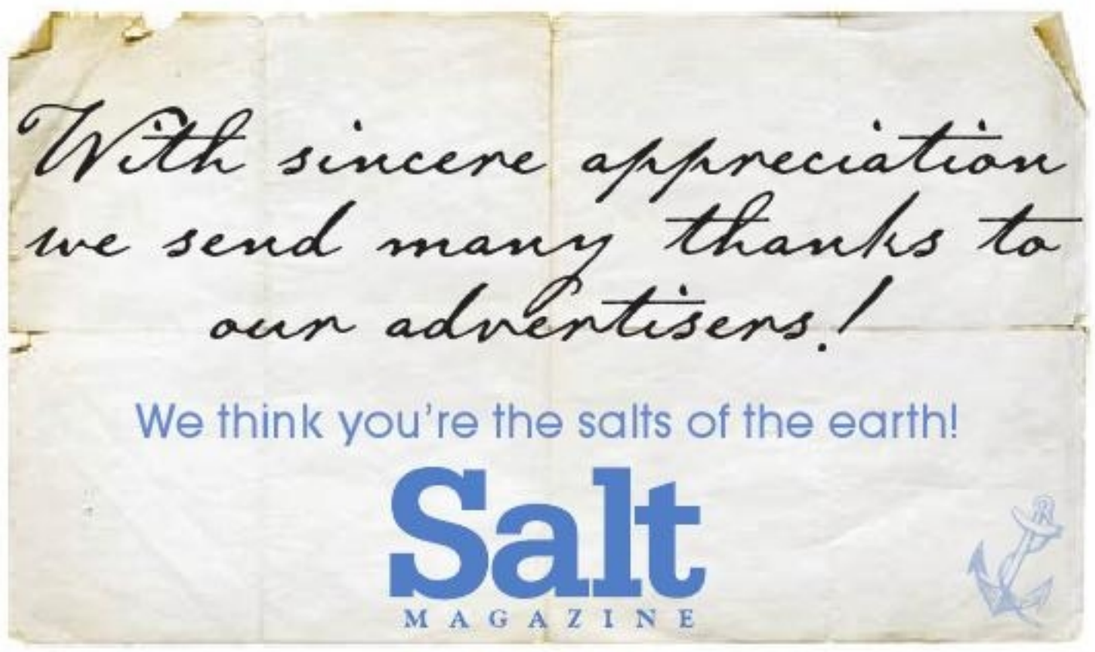


Moving Sale

I am parked at the top of the hill.
The cars stretch all the way to the bottom.
They don't know me, these strangers
who burst from the door of our home
carrying what they can haul away
in their white pickup trucks, their black vans.

A woman in purple shorts waits to get in.
I stand in the yard under the deodara cedar
and watch the lamps and tables burst
into the spring morning. The azaleas
are almost gone, brown at the edges.
Someone has even bought the doormat.

I walk around the back, and hear the small
waterfall empty into the pond. I climb
the stairs to the deck and into the dining
room where the gold chandelier still glows.
My friends stand in line and hold their purchases
up to me. Tell me the story of this one,

a neighbor asks, holding the glass elephant
my patient from dialysis gave me. Another
has a tiger, and the two Kabuki actors I bought
in Cambridge fifty years ago stride out the door
in someone's arms. Upstairs, a beautiful cherry
bureau stands in the empty bedroom. No one

has bought it. Not for sale, I scrawl on a scrap,
and take the small brown bird with metal feet
from a nearby shelf where twenty copies of my
first book wait to be shoveled off to Habitat
or to the trash. The Degas dancers still hang
on the wall of the guest bedroom downstairs.

At the end of the day I will come back for them.
It's hard to breathe the air of so much history.
Our life parades on down the hall and out the door.
A pickup truck backs up into the yard. The double
bed is loaded in the back. The wheels spin and
the truck leaves angry ruts in the soft spring grass.

– *Anthony S. Abbott*

Abbott served as president of the North Carolina Poetry Society from 2009 –2011. His newest book of poems, The Angel Dialogues, *will be released this month.*

Coming Home

Tracing the shape of a state – and a gifted writer's journey across the places of his heart – is both a painful and healing experience, marking one for life

By Wiley Cash

Getting a tattoo that runs the interior length of your upper arm gives you a lot of time to think, and that's what I was doing: getting a tattoo and thinking.

It was September 25, 2013, my first full day as a North Carolina resident after five years in graduate school in Louisiana and five more years teaching at a college in West Virginia. Before that my life had spanned North Carolina's geography. I was born in Fayetteville, and I grew up in Gastonia and Asheville. Now, here I was in Wilmington, getting a tattoo.

My wife and I had chosen to move to Wilmington because it's where she's from, and it's where we met. From the minute we planned to move back to North Carolina, I'd been telling her that I was going to get a tattoo of the state.

And that's what I found myself doing, shirtless and laid out on a padded table in a room that was a little too bright and a little too cold with a guy named Chris swabbing my arm with alcohol. It felt like I was at the doctor, but unlike being at the doctor I already knew that what was about to happen was definitely going to hurt. Once he'd cleaned my skin, Chris gently laid the stencil paper across the interior of my right arm, and after he slowly lifted it away it left behind a perfect outline of North Carolina. "So," he asked, "why are you getting this tattoo?"

I was cold and nervous, probably shaking a little, but I managed to lift my head and give what I thought to be a pretty good answer: "Because it's permanent."

"We're going to start with the far western tip," Chris said. The needle began to hum, and Chris reached out and held on to my arm. I felt the pinch against my skin, and I closed my eyes.

Cherokee, Jackson, Haywood and other counties where I'd spent years hiking, camping and exploring as a student at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. I envisioned Chris's needle as it traced North Carolina's border with Tennessee, drawing the western boundary of Madison County, where my first novel, *A Land More Kind Than Home,* was set. I'd visited Madison every chance I had while I lived in Asheville, and when I began writing the novel during my time in Louisiana, I'd chosen Madison as the setting because my memories of it spoke to the way I feel about western North Carolina: traditional and wild, both in the best senses of the words.

The needle skirted Yancey County, where my sister, Jada, lives in Celo and where I spent a lot of cool summer days on the South Toe River, escaping the Louisiana heat. After he'd left North Carolina for New York City, Thomas Wolfe had also stopped to visit relatives in Yancey County in the mid-1930s. But his visit hadn't been as peaceful as mine; he witnessed a shootout in downtown Burnsville, and in 1937, he was called back to testify in a murder trial.

Once the needle rounded the northwest corner of the state, I imagined it dipping down through Surry County on Interstate 74, traveling the same path my wife and I took on our way home from West Virginia. It would always be dark by the time we'd made it that far, and we'd pass through Winston-Salem and see the city's skyline from the highway. And then it was on to Greensboro, where I'd been a graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I'd lived in an old house right off Tate Street, and I spent a year and a half eating hot dogs from Yum-Yums and walking back and forth past Fred Chappell's office, too terrified to pop in and introduce myself after his novel *I Am One of You Forever* had changed my life both personally and artistically as an undergraduate in Asheville.

If the needle could have continued down I-40, it would've eventually run out of interstate once it reached the coast. My parents left Gastonia in 1998 and settled just south of Wilmington, and my brother followed not long after. I was living with him while we renovated a house during the summer of 2005 when I met my wife at a downtown piano bar. We were married five years later — and just a few blocks away — on a snowy Saturday in February.

But Chris's needle hadn't headed down I-40, which would've been the shortest way to Wilmington. No, he took the long route, following the northern border with Virginia and heading south at the eastern edge of Currituck County. "I want to get the details of the Outer Banks correct," he said. "So this may take a while." Who knew that such a skinny chain of islands could take so long to draw or hurt so bad while being drawn?

By the time he made it to Brunswick County I knew we were on the homestretch, and not just because he was literally passing by my parents' house in Oak Island. I imagined my mom standing on the porch and suddenly feeling a strange vibration, only to look up and see the tattoo needle blotting out the sun. I figured she'd just shake her head and go back inside the house and tell my dad I'd made another questionable decision.

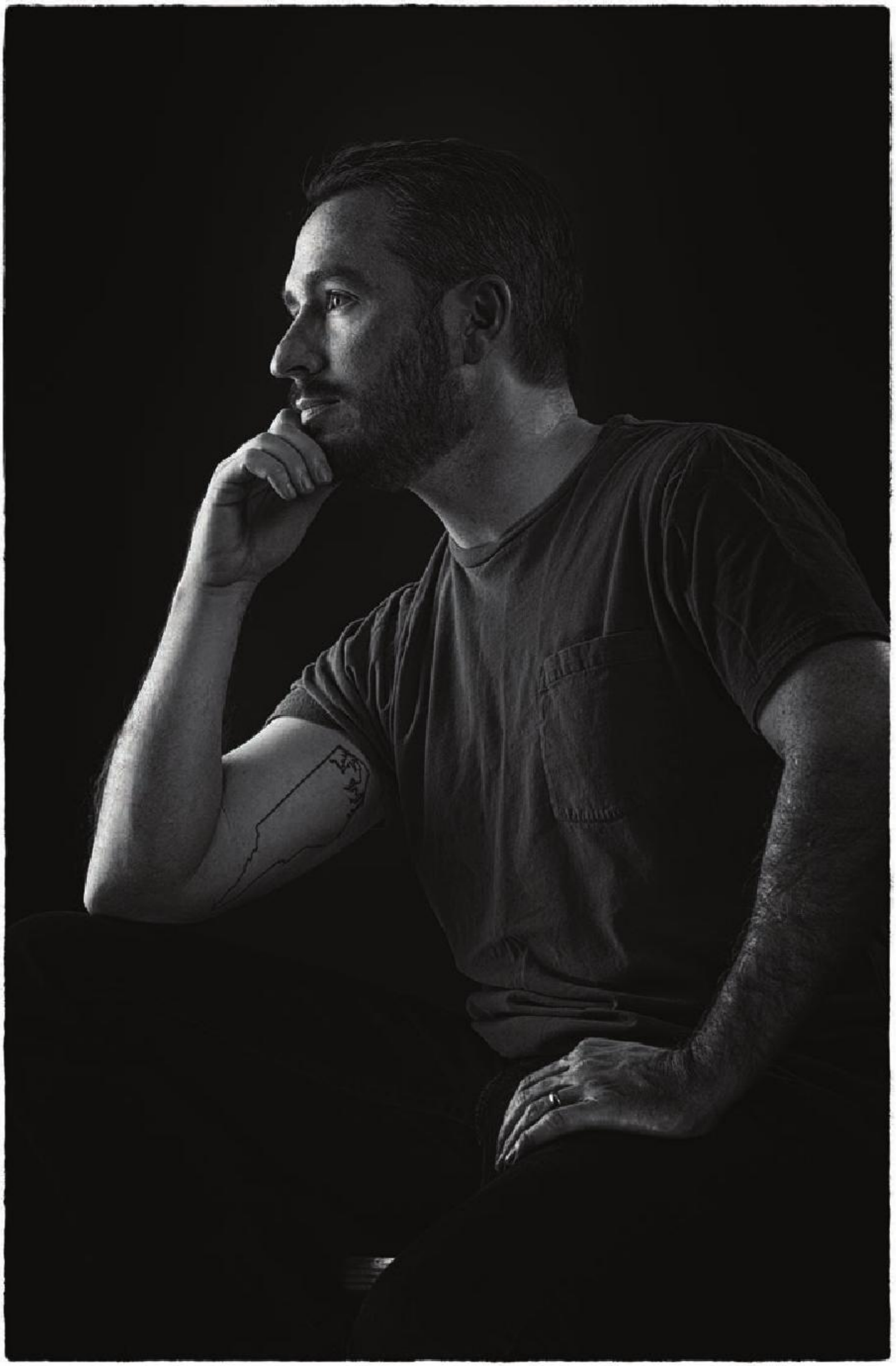
It was also the homestretch because we were barreling toward Gastonia, my hometown and where my second novel, *This Dark Road to Mercy,* is set. It's about a washed-up minor league baseball player who kidnaps his two daughters from a foster home, and I had a blast recasting all of my old haunts in fictional form: Tony's Ice Cream, my elementary school, Lineberger Park, and the minor league stadium where the Gastonia Rangers played. While Chris followed the state's southern boundary, my thoughts drifted ahead to January and February when I'd be on tour in support of the novel, and I'd have the opportunity to return to Gastonia for a reading, just as I would have the opportunity to visit many of the places I love in this state: Asheville, Shelby, Charlotte, Chapel Hill, Southern Pines, Raleigh, Pittsboro and Wilmington. I was already looking forward to all the different kinds of barbeque a trip like that would entail.

And then it was over. Before I knew it, Chris had turned off the needle and was wrapping my arm in plastic to keep it protected, and he was telling me all about how to care for the tattoo over the next couple of days.

I sat up, light-headed, and looked at my arm; it was exactly what I'd always wanted, and I couldn't take my eyes off it.

Chris must've sensed that my mind was somewhere else, because he tried to get my attention by stressing the importance of keeping my arm clean so it wouldn't get infected or damage the tattoo. But I wasn't listening. I knew I had already started to heal.

Wiley Cash is the New York Times best-selling author of A Land More Kind Than Home. *His second novel,* This Dark Road to Mercy, *which is now available wherever books are sold, tells the story of a washed-up minor league baseball player who kidnaps his two daughters from a foster home in Gastonia, North Carolina, Cash's hometown. He and his wife live in Wilmington.*



PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM SAYER

Thinking Big, Building Small

How Jock Brandis became the Thomas Edison for the world's bottom billion

By Joel Finsel · Photographs by Brownie Harris

The tall, slender, gray-haired man known simply as "Jock" to most Wilmingtonians – and to people scattered all over the planet, for that matter – was born with the slightly more exotic name of Joost Brender a Brandis, in 1946, and not in North Carolina, but in the Netherlands. When he was still a baby the family moved to an isolated farm in northern British Columbia, where he spent his childhood. His parents had not been farmers, but his father had always wanted to live in the country (on the passenger's list of the SS *Delftdyk*, which sailed into San Francisco in August 1947, he identified himself as a Dutch "agriculturist"). It was an upbringing that required a lot of improvisation. "We were so isolated," he says, "and there was no place to buy anything. If we wanted toys, we had to build them from scraps of wood." At age 12 he was given a simple how-to science kit and within a year had learned enough from it to fashion a crude blowtorch, which he used to begin building a small jet engine. According to the book his sister wrote about him fifty years later, *Thinking Big, Building Small*, the sight of a young boy doing such dangerous work had proved alarming to visiting Dutch relatives. But his parents indulged it.

In Africa, Brandis noticed that most students sit on concrete floors in their classrooms. The idea: Desks made from the surplus of plastic trash covering the ground. The base of this prototype was built using a single piece of rebar folded fifteen times.

The corn cracker began as a bicycle-powered device and evolved into this low-cost, low-tech gadget.

For a time, in his teens and 20s, Brandis's urge to tinker with machines lay dormant. He enlisted in the Navy, to pay for college, which eventually he did attend, majoring in anthropology. After graduating, and with his "idealism glands working overtime," Brandis joined CUSO (Canada's version of the Peace Corps) and wound up living in the Trench Town slum of Kingston, Jamaica, where he was supposed to teach rude boys auto repair. But because he was one of the only people there with a university degree, they asked him to teach general science instead. He did receive his first exposure to filmmaking during these years, coming to know the director Perry Hensel (of *Harder They Come* fame), but mainly Brandis found himself giving lectures on what he felt were essentially useless concepts, to kids who desperately needed hands-on skills to improve their lot and even for survival.

Brandis never forgot the frustration he'd felt in those classrooms. It sparked a belief in him that most often what people in crisis needed was not cultural betterment but know-how. Give them tools to take care of themselves and they'll build the rest. Working with Canairelief in the late '60s to help starving children in the war-torn country of Biafra (at one point it was estimated that 5,000 children were dying a day), he found that he never felt as useful as when — at a base on the old Portuguese penal colony of São Tomé — he was able to put his metalworking skills to use fixing shrapnel holes in the relief planes that carried the supplies. He accompanied some of these missions as "loadmaster," physically exchanging tons of food for starving babies, some of whom died as they lay on blankets in the cargo hold under his watch. On one of these expeditions, while riding in a jeep across a crater-strewn runway, Brandis looked up at the man across from him and recognized Kurt Vonnegut, there to report on the massacres (Brandis's stories often contain these fantastical-seeming but, it will turn out, verifiable details).

"It was a fast way to grow up," he says with characteristic understatement about his time in Biafra. But in hearing him talk about it one gets the sense that some of what he witnessed left scars. Poverty and violence had been one thing, blood and death and starvation were another. At the age of 25 — but much older in terms of experience — he decided to go home to Canada, hoping to pursue a lighter existence for a while.

It was at this point that Brandis's oldest love — amateur invention, tinkering with gizmos — came back into his life through a strange channel (though one familiar to many in the Port City), the movie business. In Toronto, he landed work on the set of a forgettable comedy-thriller titled *125 Rooms of Comfort*. He was hired as a gaffer, basically a lighting electrician. This led to work on several other productions. During one, the "rather grisly motorcycle gang feature" *Race Home to Die*, he noticed how the thick cables that snaked across the floor were causing everyone problems, tripping the actors and making it hard to maneuver carts. He started daydreaming a sort of structure, a system of aerial rigging that would elevate the light cables

Work-in-progress: Portable solar panels — so light they can be carried like backpacks.

up off the floor, both removing them from people's way and making the lights easier to move. The design involved a series of interlocking aluminum segments that, via a system of screws, could be made to hang in place overhead in various irregular spaces (making it perfect for on-location shoots). He called it the Light-Beam. The December 1974 issue of *Cinema Canada* called the invention "revolutionary" and included this little scene under "Technical News":

Toronto lighting-cameraman Jock Brandis strolled into our office not too long ago with a home-made equipment case in hand, and proceeded to construct a lighting beam across our office which was capable of supporting a couple of hundred pounds of lighting gear without making a mark on the wall. Not only that, but the entire thing weighs less than 20 pounds.

The article goes on to add that "Mr. Brandis may be found in his basement, hand-assembling these highly practical and useful items."

Four years later Brandis was living not in a basement but on a tugboat in Toronto Harbor. For fun he restored antique motorcycles. He'd set up his metal shop in an abandoned warehouse with towering ceilings in an industrial part of Toronto (in a surreal twist he was approached by a group of French Canadian circus artists wanting to know if they could "rent the air" above Brandis and his team, in order to get used to performing above crowds, as they soon began doing under the name Cirque du Soleil).

According to *Cinema Canada*, Jock's "innovative designs," some of which are still in use on movie sets around the world, had "established [him] as a living, breathing legend of the film business." The magazine even ran a beefcakey picture of him, to accompany the profile.

In 1984, the "Italian DeMille," Dino De Laurentiis — the producer who made the great *La Strada* with Fellini (and also made *Barbarella*) — decided he liked Wilmington and wanted to start making movies here. For the enterprise to work so far from Hollywood, and from the special skills and workshops that had grown up around the industry there, De Laurentiis needed people with highly adaptable talents. He needed guys like Jock, who even if they weren't in your department could tackle special problems as they arose and cobble together solutions, with limited materials, as actors sat getting paid to wait in their trailers. When directors needed quieter generators, or a bed that would appear to eat people whole, or somebody who knew how older lighting systems worked, they knew they could call Brandis. For twenty years he was a gaffer/prop maker/best boy/fixer, working on David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* and the Stephen King films *Cat's Eye* and *Maximum Overdrive*, eventually earning an Emmy for his work on, of all things, *Monday Night Football*. "I was basically a lighting guy," he says, "but I was never that good at the politics of it. At one point I did a movie with a pair of big stars, and I thought, if I ever have to spend another day with these oxygen-thieves, I'll shoot myself."

One day a friend of his, a woman named Marrie who'd become similarly disgusted by displays of Hollywood behavior, simply walked off the set. It was

In Africa it takes five people all day to shell 100 pounds of sun-dried peanuts. With the universal nut sheller, one person can do that in an hour. More protein for less labor means greater income and more productivity.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY FULL BELLY PROJECT

a particularly stupid film, and she was a script consultant. She threw down her clipboard, announced to everyone in the room that she'd been "put on the planet to do better things with her life," and left. She joined the Peace Corps and moved to Africa, to a mud-hut village in Mali called Woroni, where she stayed.

In 2001 Brandis got a call from her. The solar-powered water pump that powered the village's water system was broken. Nobody knew how to fix it. The Danish government workers who'd installed it fifteen years earlier were long gone, and without regular maintenance, it had stopped working. She'd told the local officials she knew some people who might be able to figure it out. Jock joined a team of local volunteers and, with some trepidation (this was his first trip to Africa since he'd left the "hell" of Biafra in a hail of gunfire three decades before), flew to Mali.

When the pump was fixed, some folks decided to hang around in Mali for a while. Jock did a few days of exploring around, getting to know the village. Lush, green Woroni was a far different place than Biafra had been. It was actually more like "paradise," he says.

One morning he walked out into the surrounding cotton fields. Having at that point been a Southerner for many years, he understood how the crop could devastate once fertile fields by robbing the soil of nitrogen. He was reassured to come upon a group of women shelling sun-dried peanuts. The villagers understood a basic concept of soil conservation, that peanuts and other legumes can replace the nitrogen cotton absorbs (the lesson George Washington Carver taught us in America).

But then Brandis looked closer and noticed the women's hands. They were raw and in some cases bleeding, from shelling the tough and leathery sun-dried nuts, using nothing but their fingers. And although Brandis couldn't have known it at that moment, these cuts in their hands were allowing a mold-born toxin to enter their bloodstreams, giving many of them a sometimes deadly immune disease.

"I thought, surely there was a better way," Brandis says.

Before he left Africa, he made "a very casual promise" to the head of the local women's cooperative that if she would encourage the villagers to plant more peanuts, he would send them a shelling machine. "I figured they could take the excess to market."

Back in Wilmington, he sat down at the computer, assuming that a few minutes online and a credit card transaction would be enough to satisfy his end of the bargain. But logging on led only to frustration. He found that he could easily buy a peanut-shelling factory if he wanted, but nothing that would be of any real value in a village that lacked electricity.

Confounded, he did what any rational person interested in peanut-culture would do and called Jimmy Carter. The former president's secretary got in touch with him, and dropped heavy news: Brandis was wasting his time. The

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY FULL BELLY PROJECT

machine didn't exist. Other people had called asking about it over the years, he'd checked. Brandis would have to tell the woman he couldn't deliver.

This was precisely the sort of challenge that Brandis had always loved, that had fueled him as a kid in that cold shed back in British Columbia. Something didn't exist — you had to make it yourself. Hearing that others had tried and failed just encouraged him. "Whenever I have an idea people don't laugh at," he says, "I seriously reconsider."

At first he had only a string of setbacks. The technical difficulties were formidable. It was easy to make a simple machine that would crack open shells, but one that would do so without harming the nuts inside, and especially with any kind of speed or efficiency, that was different. He ran through a sketchbook's worth of failed designs.

His luck changed when he made contact with an expert in the field of plant physiology, a professor named Tim Williams at the University of Georgia. Williams had also been looking for a small nut sheller, describing it as "the holy grail of sustainable agriculture." His own years of searching and tinkering had produced one potential clue: He'd seen a sketch of a machine that another traveler had encountered in a Bulgarian village (Bulgaria was long one of the only places in Europe that grew peanuts). The machine worked by rolling the nuts around in a kind of cone, a hollow cone with another, solid cone inside of it, and just enough space left between the two to crush the shells without hurting the nut. Williams sent Brandis a copy of the sketch.

Brandis — accustomed to working with metal — immediately took the picture to a friend's machine shop. But the machinist surprised him by suggesting they consider concrete rather than steel. "I hate messing with concrete," Brandis can be heard saying in a Canadian documentary made about this project. "I automatically assumed my idea was better than his, and having sufficiently ridiculed him, I got in my pick-up. I drove about a block when it

dawned on me that he was a genius . . .” Concrete could be made anywhere in the world, solving a major aspect of the shipping problem. Instead of sending finished machines, they’d send kits with molds and a few prefabricated metal pieces. People could build the sheller anywhere, and for almost nothing.

One problem: The molds had to be both light enough to ship and strong enough to hold up under repeated pourings of concrete. Brandis visited his old friend Pete Klingenberger, a local boat builder, to ask about the possibility of using fiberglass. Klingenberger is “a man of infinite patience,” says Brandis, who brought him model after model, as he tinkered with the design. Klingerberger would cast each one in fiberglass.

After months and dozens of prototypes, they created a machine that worked . . . but only when shelling a single nut at a time. In the Bulgarian sketch, the cone had been upside down, i.e., with the fatter part at the top (a funnel shape, the most natural-seeming shape for the task). But it created a situation inside the machine where multiple lanes essentially merged into one, jamming at the bottom.

Brandis made the one modification he accepts credit for: reversing the geometry. He literally flipped the design on its head, giving it more the shape of a traffic cone or an old-fashioned butter-churner. Now it worked beautifully, the nuts and shells falling together out of the bottom into a basket, to be wind-threshed like wheat and chaff. In an hour, someone using the sheller could outperform five others working by hand for a day. The quickly dubbed Universal Nut Sheller is now in use in at least thirty-six countries. Thousands of lives have been saved, and many more thousands improved.

But people invent things they’re hoping to sell. Full Belly is different. It works to invent things that it’s actually hoping to give away, or even just to teach other people how to make.

In the dozen years since its invention, Brandis’s peanut machine and his efforts to disseminate it have made him famous. He has won a $100,000 Purpose Prize for humanitarianism, a *Popular Mechanics* “Breakthrough” Award, and been invited to deliver a series of lectures at M.I.T. on the value of “Stone Age” technology in the modern world. Numerous documentaries and interviews cast him as a dashing inventor-hero.

In person, he seems refreshingly uninterested in the myth of himself. Quick to joke, self-deprecating, eager to engage with strangers. Of the different interviews I’ve done with him, about 99 percent were conducted in bars. His daughter, Maaike, owns Cape Fear Wine and Beer. His son, Darwin, followed him into the film industry. His partner, Gwenyfar, runs Old Books on Front Street. He carries himself very much like an unassuming fellow citizen. The Canadian in him? You do get a sense that a big part of Jock never left that shed in British Columbia. He never comes quite as alive as when talking about making things, describing his latest inventions. “How’s it going?” you might say. “Great!” he replies. “Hey, what if we built a cellphone charger that was powered by houseplants?” Or, “I’m working on this gravity-powered water pump, trying to figure out how to keep it working when the stream is low,” and he’s off . . .

The enterprise that has consumed his attention during the past decade is the internationally recognized Full Belly Project, which Brandis co-founded in 2003 with a group of fellow returned Peace Corps volunteers. The non-profit started its mission under an unusual banner: to create technology for “the bottom billion people” on the planet. One of the unfortunate things about that market is, there’s not a lot of money in it. Which explains how the industrialized world could go a century without inventing a machine as simple and vital as a hand-turned peanut sheller. But people invent things they’re hoping to sell. Full Belly is different. It works to invent things that it’s actually hoping to give away, or even just to teach other people how to make. Brandis never even took out a patent on the Universal Nut Sheller.

Most of the organization’s work has been done in the developing world where a lack of infrastructure makes smaller, human-scale machines essential. Recently, however, Brandis’s thinking has taken an interesting, inward turn. In 2009, after an awards ceremony at Stanford, he met a man named Tim Wills, who’d founded the nonprofit Foothills Connect, a “rural technology” initiative that worked to link North Carolina farmers with high-class chefs in Charlotte. The locavore food movement had created a market for locally, sustainably grown crops, but it wasn’t easy for the restaurants and the small farmers to find one another. More than that, many of the farmers were facing new challenges brought on by climate change. There was less rain, for one thing. They’d grown used to growing only corn, and corn needs a lot of resources. It’s easier for big farms, with giant irrigation and fertilizer systems. But for the smaller landholders, “Monsanto has left them behind,” Jock says.

Wills introduced Brandis to Henry Edwards, an 84-year-old man in the North Carolina foothills whose 340-acre farm has been in his family since the eighteenth century. When Edwards started growing corn, “back when the climate cooperated,” as he put it, rains averaged fifty-five inches, which was enough not to require irrigation. Recent droughts had changed all that. Still, the family was holding on.

On Jock’s first visit to the Edwards’ farm, he watched Henry push an antique hand-cultivator through the field to dig a furrow. “I thought, ‘That’s too Africa for words.’” He quickly realized that some of what he’d been doing and learning in other, poorer countries was relevant to people in his backyard.

In consultation with Henry Edwards, the farmer’s son, Duncan (a former Exxon geophysicist who worked closely with Brandis at the farm), and Tim Wills of Foothills Connect, Brandis turned the power of his daydreaming on an Appalachian small farm. They developed a cluster of ingenious devices: a gravity-powered water pump that sits directly in the bed of a stream and by a seesawing motion generates enough energy to move water 900 feet, also a portable pump apparatus that could be moved from pasture to pasture with the stock and used to fill the drinking troughs. These could themselves be modified into special solar-powered motion-activated basins (Brandis calls them “horse water fountains”) that can detect an animal’s approach, filling and emptying as needed or not, getting rid of the stagnant pools that breed equine diseases like “the strangles.” In the last two years the Edwards clan has started harvesting eight to ten acres of corn again.

On a recent Saturday, I joined about twenty other volunteers at the Full Belly Project’s cerulean blue shed on Chestnut Street. Brandis was in Cambodia, filming an episode of the documentary series *REPLAN-IT*. The challenge was to help poor people in Cambodia who don’t have access to sanitation. Brandis and the other crew members were staying in nice hotels in Phnom Penh, and he noticed (as one does occasionally) how much soap was being wasted. He used the bar once or twice, but the maids replaced it every day. Meanwhile the people they’d come to help were dying, some of them from unsanitary conditions. Full Belly partnered with a Cambodian NGO to start a soap-recycling initiative. The used soap bars are sterilized, used coffee grounds are stirred in as an exfoliant, and the mixture is pressed into new bars. The hotels buy the machines and do the soap-making. In exchange they get to put up little cards in their bathrooms boasting of the fact, providing some valuable green P.R.

Snooping around the shop, I took in a few of Brandis’s other recent inventions. There were portable sanitation stations to be positioned next to outhouses (empty two-liter soda bottles are suspended upside down

Full Belly recently partnered with a Cambodian NGO to start a soap-recycling initiative. Brandis explains how used soap from hotels can be sterilized and then pressed into new bars with this machine.

around a kind of concrete sink, with a barrel-and-tire contraption to catch used water). There were aflatoxin Peanut-screeners (they look like futuristic versions of those old Fisher Price Viewmasters and use black light to identify infected nuts). And finally, desks designed to fold out into beds for students in typhoon-stricken places, where schools are often the only safe havens to wait out storms. There was also a new design for students in Africa where most children are still forced to sit on classroom floors. The skeleton of the seat and table is built of a single piece of rebar — the pliable metal rods sometimes seen jutting from cracked concrete — folded fifteen times into an origami desk. A high school volunteer came up with it. The surfaces will be made of the "mountains of plastic trash" in places like Nairobi, where the Full Belly Project will soon begin partnering with another NGO already on the ground. Jock envisions paying slum-dwelling children to gather the plastic. He will set up the solar ovens somewhere out in public, a place where locals can gather to watch him melt it into hard sheets, offer their own ideas, and hopefully decide to use the same process to make other materials, like roofing tiles. Scanning all the prototypes, it was obvious that Brandis's quest to design for the bottom billion was far from complete. It could even be said that he's just getting underway.

Grabbing a pair of work gloves from a nail by the door, I overheard one high-school-age volunteer, a tall dark-haired kid, ask another what they should do with Jock out of town.

"What we always do," the other answered. "Get the shop ready for when he's back."

For more information, visit www.thefullbellyproject.org.

Joel Finsel is the author of Cocktails & Conversations from the Astral Plane. *Have him mix up an antique cocktail for you sometime at Manna.*

At School in the Ocean

Teach a kid to fish and he or she will fall in love with the world below the surface

By Virginia Holman

What does it mean to care deeply about a place and its people? Many of us hold our coastal community and environment in high personal regard, but the most useful and lasting expression of care moves us beyond private sentiment and impels us to act. Action is care made manifest; it is service. For some people, service begins as a calling in the same passionate way that people are called to a life in the church or the military or the classroom. For others, service manifests in a more focused but no less meaningful manner — as a meal provided to an ailing neighbor or a willingness to collect litter found on the beach. One lovely and simple definition of service is from the author and psychiatrist Robert Coles, who noted that "service is a means of putting to use what has been learned."

Richard Cecelski has been living a life of great service to the state of North Carolina for nearly twenty-two years. He's the founder and director of Carolina Ocean Studies, a hands-on marine education program. The program began in 1992 and has since introduced approximately 350,000 school-age kids to the wonders of our fragile coastal ecosystem. How has Carolina Ocean Studies managed to educate so many students? If you ask Richard Cecelski, he'll simply respond, "We take kids out to fish."

Cecelski's manner is laid-back and understated. Get him talking, however, and you'll soon discover this tall, quiet man has the focus of a raptor. It's this vision that's built Carolina Ocean Studies. Each year he takes 17,000 students "out to fish" with him, his team of marine science educators and Captain Skeets Winner. These students will learn about North Carolina's marine and estuarine environments while visiting the Gulf Stream, Shackleford Banks, Masonboro Island and Cape Lookout.

Today, I'm fortunate to join the staff and crew of Carolina Ocean Studies on a half-day educational program that will include ocean collecting, reef fishing and marine biology lessons.

The adventure starts as soon as seventy middle-schoolers from Clinton, North Carolina, arrive at the Carolina Beach Marina.

Before the students board the SS *Winner Queen*, the ebullient and formidable Zulma Marin, one of the teachers at Sampson Middle, asks the students to line up and listen to Mr. Cecelski. The seventh- and eighth- graders immediately hush and stand at attention. Even though Marin teaches at an inland school, it's clear she runs a tight ship. Richard Cecelski does too. He efficiently runs through the rules of where to sit and stand, and makes it clear that the students must listen and follow directions at all times. The students, in unison, affirm that they will do so. Then Cecelski smiles and talks to the kids for a few minutes about the fishing portion of the trip. Most of the students have never held a rod and reel, and only a handful have ever been on the ocean. He warns that there's a gentle three-to-four foot swell running in the ocean today, and that a couple of them might feel a little seasick. "If that happens, the best thing to do," he says, "is stay on deck. Don't retreat to the cabin. Staying in the ocean breeze and looking at the shore can help."

Once the preliminaries are complete, the kids come aboard. A few staff members have spent the last thirty minutes cutting up squid and shrimp as bait, and several bowls are in view. Some of the kids look suspicious. One girl looks at her friend and says, "uh-oh, you are going to have bait my hook."

I'm surprised when Cecelski tells me that many of the students from our coastal communities have never spent time on our waterways. Here in Wilmington, the coast fuels nearly every aspect of our local economy, it informs statewide policy, and is an ever-changing source of natural beauty and bounty. If we don't teach others "to appreciate it, respect it and understand it," Cecelski notes, our efforts to "sustain one another and our environment are hobbled straight out the gate."

Cecelski believes that students must be taught about the coast, and that the best way to learn is through hands-on experience. Otherwise, the coastal environment remains an abstraction. Since North Carolina's inland creeks, streams and rivers inland all empty at the coast, he says it's imperative to educate children throughout the state about our coastal ecology and marine life, not just those who live on the coastal plain. It brings to mind prolific eco poet Wendell Berry's exhortation to "do unto those downstream as you would have those upstream do unto you."

The teachers, students and staff gather on the upper deck and the boat motors toward Carolina Beach Inlet. Lacy Simpson, a graduate of UNCW's marine biology program, begins the first lesson of the day. Simpson doesn't lecture the kids; she draws them in to the conversation and builds on the lessons they've been learning back at Sampson Middle School.

"So, this area on our port side, where the river comes in through Snow's Cut and the Atlantic Ocean comes in through Carolina Beach Inlet, has what type of water?"

"Brackish!" calls out one boy.

"It's an estuary," says another.

"You're both right!" Simpson says. Her blonde ponytail whips in the wind. "The Cape Fear River water is brackish. It has more salt than freshwater because it's a tidal river that empties into the ocean. This area around Snow's Cut is an estuarine environment."

Simpson explains that the estuary supports a wide variety of fish, and that estuarine environments are critical nursery and breeding habitats for many varieties of fish.

She points to the tidal line that marks the confluence of the river and the ocean.

"Why is the water coming from the river reddish brown?"

"Because it's polluted?"

"Actually, the reddish brown color of the water comes from decaying plant matter. Cypress trees and leaves stain the water with tannic acid and give it a unique iced-tea color. In fact, tannins are what make your iced tea the same red-brown color."

That's not to say pollution isn't an issue in North Carolina's waterways. Cecelski tells me that one big cause of pollution in the river and the ocean comes from soil erosion. I'm surprised. Cecelski says that though pollution does occur from "what we spray on farm fields and forest plantations, perhaps the worst pollution we have in our waters is from sediment—what kids might think of as 'soil' or 'dirt.' Sediment pollution comes about from land clearing and other things that we do that disturb the land, and causes soil erosion."

Cecelski says that poor farming and land development practices as well as dredging release a tremendous amount of sediment into our waterways. "This collection of sediment reduces the 'photic zone'—the area where sunlight is available for phytoplankton or aquatic vegetation. Sediments in our waters can also clog fish gills, cover bottom habitats, and raise the water temperature." All of this makes it harder for marine life to thrive.

As we make our way through Carolina Beach Inlet, the waves kick up and the boat rocks a bit. The kids squeal with delight. Then one cries out, and another, "Dolphin! Dolphin!"

A huge pod of Atlantic bottlenose dolphins can be seen about 300 yards away. Cecelski estimates that there are at least fifty of them. The kids snap photos with their phones. The dolphins glint and spew jets of mist from their blowholes. Watching the kids watch the dolphins, I find myself profoundly moved. How could we not want to protect this place for future generations to enjoy?

Once we're out on the ocean, the students break in to three groups and the staff teach the students for a couple of hours about the life that teems in the waters below. They learn about the life cycle, habitat and anatomy of bivalves and squid, of crabs and black sea bass. They learn about the importance of plankton to a healthy ocean. They marvel at the heft and hard shell of a large blue crab, and its sharp pincers, delicate eyestalks and hinged swimmerets.

"What life there is in the sea!" Zulma Marin exclaims to her group. "All of this is underneath us, right now. I mean: Wow!"

The kids are curious. Some are brave and have no problem holding a slimy squid. Others are more hesitant, fearing a sting or bite from a crab, even though the pincers have been temporarily clamped with rubber bands.

When we reach the reef, Cecelksi and his crew ready the crowd to fish. Fishing poles line both sides of the SS *Winner Queen* and within minutes all of them have cast their lines. By some miracle, or perhaps due to Cecelski's twenty years' experience taking large groups deep sea fishing, the lines don't snag or tangle. In no time at all, the students are hauling in a respectable catch. Black sea bass and pompano are biting today. Cecelski and his crew are on hand to help take the fish from the hooks or fix a malfunctioning bale. So many kids are catching fish the crew seems barely able to keep up. Cecelski, though, doesn't mind the frenetic pace; he looks as happy as the students. The delight on board is palpable. The hissing waves, the salty air, the thrill of catching fish upon fish reveals on the faces of these kids a pure and primal joy. Because, really, what on earth could ever be better than fishing with your friends? Some of the teachers and students will take the larger fish home with them, but most are identified and then returned to the sea.

After a couple of hours, we head back to Carolina Beach. The kids whoop as the SS *Winner Queen's* catamaran hull surfs through the inlet on the flood tide. Overall, the group is tired and happy. A couple of girls stand on the deck and sigh as we pass by Masonboro Island. That's Masonboro Island, I tell them. It belongs to the state of North Carolina.

"I want an island," says one girl.

"That is your island," Lacy Simpson tells her. "It belongs to everybody in North Carolina. It belongs to you."

After the trip, I find I think quite a bit about our local waterways and our schoolchildren. In North Carolina, both are precious resources that seem to me to be too often imperiled and compromised. I want to do something. Then I truly understand Richard Cecelski has the right idea. I, too, can take some kids fishing. That's a serviceable start, and one way I can put to use what I've learned here today.

Interested in arranging a field trip with Carolina Ocean Studies?
Carolina Ocean Studies, P.O. Box 550, Carolina Beach, NC 28428
Information: (910) 458-7302; www.carolinaoceanstudies.com.

PHOTOGRAPHS THIS PAGE BY VIRGINIA HOLMAN

Ezekiel Saw the Wheel

Fiction by Randall Kenan

Gloria Brown dreamt her daughter would die in a helicopter. Tamar was a master sergeant in the Army due to fly out for her third tour next Thursday. Tamar's birthday/going away party was later that very day. Tamar's father, Gloria's ex-husband and business partner, would be there. Gloria needed to stop by and pick up the cake — a giant, rectangular-shaped red velvet cake, Tamar's favorite. Gloria kept glancing at the clock on the wall. She needed to go soon.

The man had sat in silence for the last ten minutes. Perhaps longer. Gloria was not really sure. But this sort of awkward silence was part of her job. Had been since the beginning. People would be surprised how often exactly this sort of thing happened. News of the recently deceased — especially someone mighty close — sometimes conjured up something like paralysis, as if the mind had gone off-line, had shut down to reboot.

The man and his wife had been taking a long-postponed trip to the Outer Banks. The story was that she had kin there, though she had never met them, nor did they try to connect on this particular visit, and the couple had been on their way to Wilmington when she was stricken by a massive stroke at a Hardee's in Crosstown. The coroner had a "bug up my behind" — as he himself said one cold morning out back of the county offices, cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth — about any corporate-run funeral homes, so he always contracted out to independents. Today he'd called Gloria and Ray, "Got an out-of-towner for y'all." What followed was paperwork, largely; a few phone calls; and an awkward conversation with a man who had not planned on driving home alone.

Gloria asked the man, who still sat in silence, "Is there someone I can call to come drive you back to Texas, sir?"

She could tell when it was about to happen, she could almost see it happening, like watching the lights at the top of a tower switching off, going dim right before her eyes. One level at a time. Radio silence. For some reason these silences never bothered her. Her ex-husband once told her she was simply intuitive and a natural empath. At the time Gloria had not a clue as to what he had meant.

Gloria wanted to call the cake-maker to make sure the big red cake would be ready. She felt certain it would be, but she had a tendency to worry about things of this nature, things over which she had some control. Things like a grieving widower, for some reason, perturbed her much less.

Indeed, she could tell he was not the sort of man who wanted someone to come and sit next to him, to hold his hand, and say those things a mortuary professional was expected to say, practiced, road-tested proverbs and reassurances as eye-catching and non-threatening as fruit baskets, delivered with highly convincing sincerity which, paradoxically, could not be faked.

Last night's dream had been in Technicolor, filled with swirling dust and lots of cussing. Big boys in big sand-colored boots. The sand-colored camouflage Gloria had come to hate seeing in airports. Anywhere. She dreamed a dream of blood. She dreamed a dream of helicopter blades going swoosh, swoosh and swoosh, and then stopping. Just like in the movies Gloria had watched about the troops in Iraq. *Black Hawk Down*. *Jar Head*. That TV series on Lifetime. She had gone in and out of periods of watching and reading lots of media about the war. Some weeks she tried to pretend, tried to imagine Tamar was coaching basketball at a small school, or teaching, until she got an email from her daughter, or did that talking through the computer (that never seemed to work right), or it was time to send off a care package. In truth, she spent little time not thinking about her oldest daughter being 7,437 miles away from home, more or less. Thereabouts.

The dream tasted like reality and had the weight of the evidence of things not seen and the substance of things yet to come, and Gloria wanted to talk to her pastor, but her new pastor — all

armed with his M.Div. from Union Seminary and his M.S.W. from Chapel Hill — would try to interpret the dream and talk about Alice Miller or some psychologist. Couldn't the man see she had been dealing with death and dreams for the last thirty years? She wasn't exactly a pullet. This sort of thing the pastor had done before. Gloria eventually stopped talking to him about her dreams. She knew when a dream was a dream and when a dream was more than a dream. This one felt like something more than a dream, and she knew there was not a thing she could do about it but pray. Tamar was getting on that plane. And Gloria was bound to see her off. Send her off. Cling to faith. See what the Lord had in store. Hope. Pray. Be humble. Believe.

Soon and very soon Gloria would finish up here with this gentleman, finish making the transfer arrangements with the funeral home in Texas, escort this gentleman out, lock up and fetch the red velvet cake. There was still plenty of time.

She would arrive home and find her younger daughter, Eunice — so capable and reliable despite her seemingly silly and frivolous nature and inexhaustible need to gossip and her overweening need for attention. Eunice and her five children and her dour husband, who seemed only happy while watching basketball or football.

Gloria would find Lilith already in the kitchen, finishing up something delicious, something old, something new, showing off her almost supernatural skills, not so much a showing off as an offering of herself, her abundance, an ingratiation: "I am doing this, putting forth this effort, so that you will like me, Mrs. Brown, and there is so much to like; if you do not like me, something must be wrong with you."

Sometimes it took Gloria aback, startled her, when she considered how well she got along with — how much she actually liked and enjoyed — her older daughter Tamar's girlfriend — indeed thought of her as her own daughter, though in a guarded sense. Lord knows, in so many ways Lilith trumped either of her two girls as women . . . despite her affliction. But the Lord loved her just the same, the same as he loved Tamar. This lesson her new pastor was trying to teach her, had been teaching her, and what a blessing it was now to release the unease and vexation she had been harboring in her bosom, lo these many years. Since before Tamar played varsity basketball and all those loud whispers came from behind her back like coiled and poisonous vipers.

But the Lord said you shall handle venomous snakes and yet live. Amen. This Gloria Brown had done. Many, many times.

Gloria sighed out loud.

She grimaced when she realized she had troubled the silence. How long had they been sitting here?

Gloria imagined Lilith sitting where this abject Texan now sat. Gloria allowed herself to wonder how Lilith would process Tamar's demise. With cold, icy, machine-like efficiency? Or with the light, butterfly warmth that seemed to accompany almost anything she did, surrounded by doves, rainbows, and unicorns? Or would she suddenly reveal the seams in her stitchwork, unravel, allow the tears and the snot to run, and jump aboard the grief train full of howls and woe, incoherent and feeling the growing void inside? Or would she be like the stoic Texan before Gloria, incapable of speech, downright cataleptic with fear? Gloria knew that fear.

She prayed,

Lord, don't let my baby die over yonder. You are God and You send us signs and wonders, and Your will shall be done. Your ways are not our ways. Your ways are mysterious and awesome to behold. But You said, Lord, yes You did, that the prayers of a righteous man — a righteous woman — avails much. Let no hard befall my girl, dear Lord, our Father. Protect her as you have protected her and I shall remain your servant.

The man was staring directly at Gloria, and for a moment she feared she had been praying in words and not just in her mind. As the stare continued unbroken, she knew it was something more, a recognition, something shared, something ineffable, very like the passing of an angel in the darkness of the night.

Listen.

Gloria Brown was very good at listening.

Randall Kenan, who will be among the great American authors participating in Wilmington's first annual BooksmARTS event on March 8, is the author of a novel, A Visitation of Spirits; *two works of nonfiction,* Walking on Water: Black American Lives at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century *and* The Fire This Time; *and a collection of stories,* Let the Dead Bury Their Dead. *Among his awards are a Guggenheim Fellowship, the North Carolina Award, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters' Rome Prize.*

The Eco-Palace

For the robust and growing Piper family of Carolina Beach, fun is key to a happy home life

By Anne Barnhill • Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

If houses, like dogs, can be said to resemble their owners, then Todd and Tina Piper's home fits the bill. Their house has a playful feel and, as "beach people," the Pipers enjoy a lifestyle best described as fun-filled. Basically a large cube with bright colors and a slightly industrial feel, the house commands attention from the otherwise predictable homes in this quiet neighborhood at Carolina Beach.

The Piper house is anything but traditional. Exterior walls on the second and third floors are made of blue metal roofing, creating a vertical rather than horizontal line flow. The first floor is concrete. An orange chimney juts out to one side while a generous deck perches above the garage door, which is painted black. The structure itself towers above the surrounding homes, barely beneath the height stipulations for the island. The front entranceway is recessed, and the front door is painted bright, bold red.

"We think of it as a modern beach shack," says Todd Piper of the seven-level, eco-friendly home they finished last year. They began the project three-and-a-half years ago, with Piper doing much of the work himself.

"We like the open, relaxed feel — we have a lot of parties and the kids have friends over all the time," says Piper. When you look around, you can see it's the perfect place for kids — especially two young boys who love the beach as much as their parents do.

The house itself was designed by Wilmington architect Kevin Pfirman, and the structure incorporates the ideas Piper developed as a student in environmental studies at UNCW.

"I was in college when Hurricane Fran hit and I saw the damage. I wanted a house that could withstand that kind of event. I also wanted a house that would take care of the environment," says Piper.

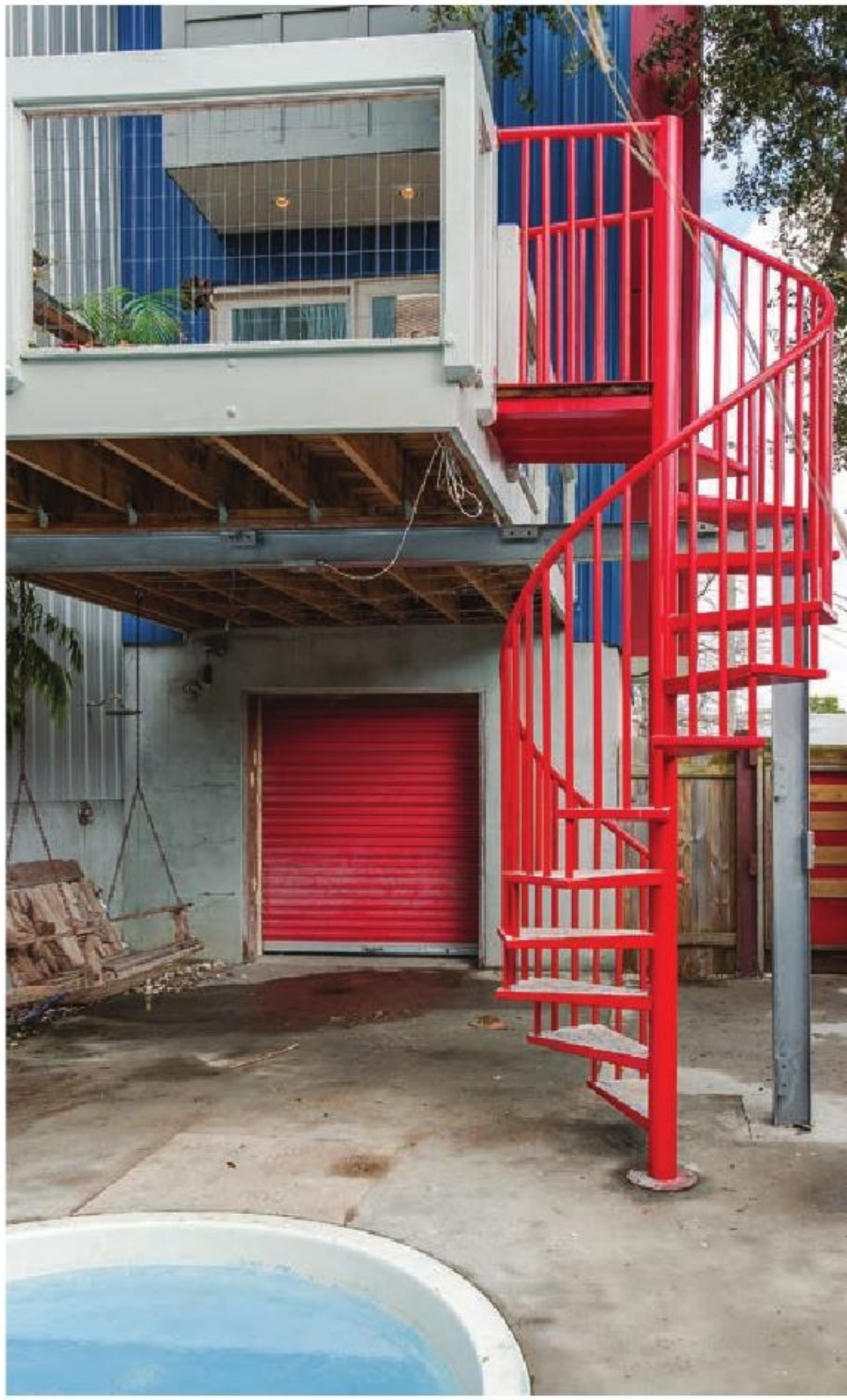
The house is constructed of concrete. Even the way the house fits together is part of the fun.

"If you can think about the way Legos go together, that's the way this house is built. It's based on 10-by-10-foot blocks that stack on each other. It's very strong. We haven't turned on the heat yet — so far, the floors have kept the place warm," says Piper. The concrete holds the heat a very long time, he notes, much the way a rock holds the sun's heat after the sun has gone down. This makes the construction quite energy efficient.

The Pipers designed the house with sons Noah, 8, and Fisher, 6, very much in mind. For starters, it's right across the street from the elementary school the boys attend.

"We bought because of the school. We bulldozed the original house and began on our own," says Piper.

But placement wasn't the only consideration for the boys. They have their own floor, complete with playroom, bath and separate bedrooms. The whole area is painted bright blue with burnt orange trim. One wall is completely windowed and a swing-chair hangs from the ceiling. In a touch of pure whimsy, there is a small opening, similar to a doggy-door but bigger, where the boys can sneak into each other's rooms. In the bath, there is a urinal, a perfect solution for the sometimes hurried efforts of young boys. And the oversized doors on their closets are covered in cork, becoming sliding art displays.



In the backyard, you'll find a pool with a bright red, metal spiral staircase coming from the upper deck down to the swimming area. A large sliding board leans against a tree, creating an environmentally clever play area. The next project is to build a treehouse in that same tree. Beneath the deck are at least a couple of dozen surf boards.

"My wife and I met surfing and we love to surf. The boards get worn, but we keep them in case we have guests. Believe it or not, we've got more in storage," says Piper.

Because the house is constructed in levels, it provides lots of private areas. On the first level, an in-law suite, complete with kitchenette, ensures grandparents will visit often, much to the boys' delight.

"Sometimes, Tina and I will have a date night, go to a movie or something, then come back to the in-law suite. It's like going to a hotel," says Piper.

There is also a laundry room on the first level.

As you climb about nine steps, you arrive at the second level, which is the family room/kitchen area. On two sides of the family room are large decks, one with an outside fire pit. These are accessed via large glass doors, giving a wonderful feeling of openness to the living area.

Many of the construction materials are recycled. The idea of using building supplies from other places dovetails nicely with Piper's idea of helping the environment. His own business, Tidal Wave Construction, enables him to find interesting pieces from his renovation projects to reuse in new ways. The wall behind the fireplace in the living room is one example.

"This is an old tin roof from a building I worked on. They were going to throw it out. I didn't know back then where I'd use it, so I stored it. My wife wanted to paint it but I like the worn look of it — I think it makes the fireplace," says Piper.

For entertaining, the entire level can be opened up so the two decks connect to the living room and kitchen. And if a guest wants to go for a swim, there is that lovely spiral staircase curving down to the pool area.

The next level, which forms a loft above the main living area, consists of a small gym and Piper's office.

"The boys love to come in here and wrestle. I got head gear for them and boxing gloves because they really go at it. I made them this climbing wall and got the hand grips for a great price, used, of course. Their friends come over and don't want to go home," says Piper of the mat-lined area loaded with exercise equipment. A punching bag completes the set-up.

On the other side of the L-shaped level is Piper's office.

"I've always had my own business — I had a yard service when I was 13. I was very interested in combining my ideas about protecting the environment with construction. Finally, I got my general contractor's license and started Tidal Wave Construction," says Piper. Now he builds houses and does renovations all over the East Coast.

Prior to starting Tidal Wave Construction, Piper worked in Kentucky and West Virginia immediately after graduation from UNCW. He walked pipelines, making sure there were no leaks or other problems. But while he was fond of the mountains, the beach is where he wanted to be on a permanent basis.

In his office, everything fits perfectly: The desk is the exact size of the window above it, and the chair and couch create a cozy feel against the pine floor, the only floor in the house that isn't concrete.

It's from virgin North Carolina pine and is another example of re-envisioning ways materials can be used. The same wood is used on the steps, adding warmth to the home.

The next level up belongs to the boys.

"What I love about this house is the mix of public and private space," says Piper. "The kids have this whole level and it was designed to be kidproof. When they have friends over, we don't have to worry about the house because there's enough space for everyone to enjoy — we make use of the entire house. There's isn't a nook or cranny we don't use.

The master suite is on the next level, which gives the Pipers privacy and a respite from the clatter of children. A large bed is suspended from the ceiling with sturdy chains and the headboard isn't really attached to the bed — it's nailed to the back wall and the bed is mounted beneath the slats. An enormous walk-in closet and full bath complete the area. There's also a small deck overlooking the side yard.

Finally, nine more steps lead to the top level. There's a tiny room up there, large enough for a chair. You might wonder what the purpose of this small room is until you realize the room opens out onto the large, tiled roof.

"We show movies out here. We hang a sheet from the top roof and put out mats for folks to sit on. Sometimes, the boys have friends over and they sleep up here. We wanted to be able to use the roof as another room," says Piper.

No gutters destroy the clean lines of the house. Instead, rainwater drains from "rain chains" which hang down to the ground level and drain into a cement stand that looks like a planter filled with bamboo. However, in the middle of the plant stand is a filter, which allows the water to travel to an underground cistern. This rainwater is used to keep the lawn and plants green in the dry season.

The open feeling of the house, the many levels and the strategic use of windows make the house seem much larger than it is. Tallying in at 2,800 square feet, the home feels twice that size.

Though the house might not be as large as one might think, there are still plenty of steps to climb to reach all six levels. However, the Pipers considered this in the original design and an elevator shaft awaits its elevator, which will make doing laundry, and other chores, easier.

"There will be seven stops for the elevator, which puts it in an industrial category and makes it more expensive. It's one of the things we want to incorporate. We've only been in the house a year and we have lots of plans for its future. I want to plant more fruit trees, for one thing," says Piper.

Using the inside and outside space to its full potential is one way the Pipers can help the environment. And, by providing a house made for easy-living, the construction suits the personality of the family.

"We're beach people — we love to surf and walk in the sand," says Piper. "We can see the ocean from the roof. This is the perfect house for us — exactly what we wanted."

Anne Barnhill's novel, Queen Elizabeth's Daughter, *will be released from St. Martin's Press this month. She is the author of three other books along with a poetry chapbook.*

Down on the Farm

By Claire K. Connelly · Photographs by Mark Steelman

Old MacDonald never had a farm like this. Sure, he had a pig, a cow, a horse, and some chickens — but he never had a prized hen named Hilda, didn't keep bees, and if he ever made goat milk soap, the kids didn't know about it. At Greenlands Farm in nearby Bolivia, where dairy goats graze in their pastures and chickens roam free in the Japanese persimmon orchard, Henry and Heather Burkert invite children and young adults to come and see what life on a real working farm is like. For some, it's their first time meeting an actual farmer.

Heather Burkert, who is slight and soft-spoken with pleasant, delicate features, offers a wry smile as she recalls one 5-year-old girl's reaction to her appearance: "I thought all farmers wore overalls and had teeth missing."

Even before they started actually farming, the Burkerts were interested in the local-foods and healthy-eating movement. Their children grew up on nutritious, home-cooked meals, and since found-

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PERSIMMON
FRUIT CAKE
LAVENDER
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GREENLANDS FARM
Rosemary Crackers

GREENLANDS FARM
Pickled Hungarian Hot Wax Peppers
Ingredients: Greenlands farm Organic Hungarian hot wax peppers, vinegar, salt, sugar, horseradish, garlic, calcium chloride
NET WT. 16 OZ
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ing Greenlands Farm in 2001, the Burkerts have become apostles of organic foods, insisting that crops grown organically not only taste sweeter and richer — they are far better for you.

The Farm, which spans a gracious 21-acres, includes an old-fashioned store where you can find farm fresh fruits and vegetables, honey straight from the hive, and homemade bread. At the deli, Hilda Hen's famous egg salad sandwich, "field to fork" salads, and hand-dipped ice cream keep patrons coming back.

Most children come to Greenlands Farm for the petting zoo and pony rides on Saturday mornings. What they leave with is an idea of the labor behind each meal they enjoy at the dinner table, and, hopefully, a sense of wonder and appreciation for the fruits of the earth.

Greenlands Farm is located at 668 Midway Road, Bolivia. Winter hours: Thursday & Friday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Info: (910) 253-7934 or www.greenlandsfarmstore.info.

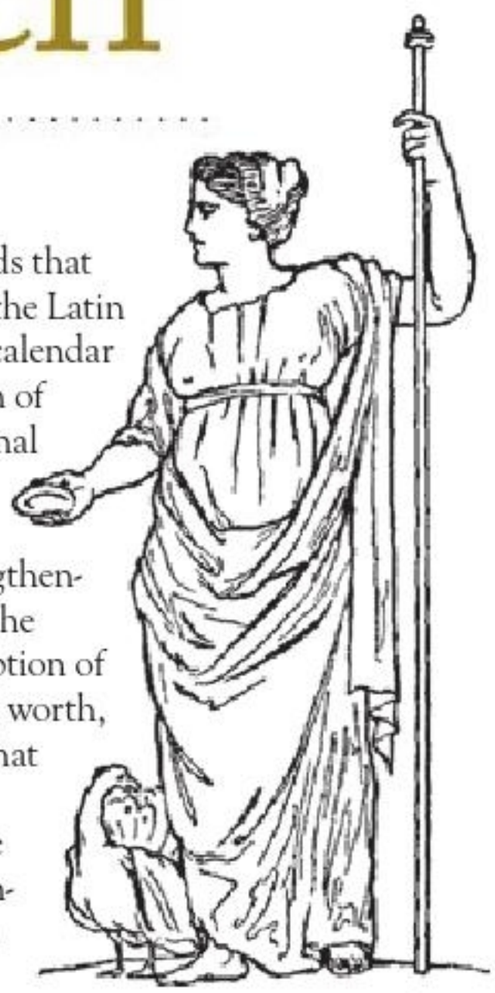
ALMANAC

March

"The first day of spring was once the time for taking the young virgins into the field, there in dalliance to set an example in fertility for nature to follow. Now we just set the clocks an hour forward and check the oil in the crankcase."

— E.B. White, *One Man's Meat*, 1944

By Noah Salt



The month of March, with its violent winds that signal change of season, takes its name from the Latin Martius, the first month of the early Roman calendar named for Mars, god of war but also guardian of agriculture. The new year began with the vernal equinox on March 21, observed with food and wine festivals in honor of Juno, the goddess of home and garden, to celebrate the lengthening of days and start of the growing season. The practice ended with the Western world's adoption of the Gregorian Calendar in 1752. For what it's worth, the Almanac gardener has long maintained that the arrival of spring would make a far better moment to commence the New Year than the traditional January start — a nice glass of fresh-squeezed orange juice on the sunny terrace in place of an Alka-Seltzer on the rocks and a driveway to shovel. Besides, in place of all those pointless bowl games and diet ads, we'd have basketball's March Madness for the New Year.

Miss Lawrence's First Flowers

With us, daffodils are in bloom by the middle of March. They bloom before the leaves are on the trees, and the shrubs that bloom with them are leafless too. Very early in spring, the purple-leaf plum is in flower with the saucer magnolia, Japanese quince, forsythia, and Thunberg spirea. By this time the common primrose is in bloom with perennial candy-tuft and black-purple pansies. Dutch hyacinths bloom with daffodils. I often wonder why they are not generally more planted. The soft tints are charming in combination with early spring flowers, and they are a welcome change from so much yellow. In late March, the silvery blue of the hyacinth 'Electra' is delightful with yellow primroses of the Munstead strain and white candytuft.

– *The Home Garden*, by Elizabeth Lawrence, 1943

Harbinger of Spring

Eight years ago the AG and his bride and three bossy dogs moved into a rambling old house whose principal charm was a woefully neglected back terrace presided over by a pair of trained Savannah holly trees. The house's previous occupants clearly weren't gardeners, evidenced by a surrounding border that had been left to grow wild with weeds and brambles. In the midst of cleaning out the beds, however, we found a small waxy-leafed mystery plant struggling for life that looked familiar. I decided to look it up and discovered it was a very young hellebore, Helleborus orientalis, better known as the Lenten rose. All our foundling needed was a shovel of good organic matter and a bit of room to grow, quickly spreading and establishing itself as the undisputed star of our backyard shade garden. The delicate white blooms of this hardy gem first appear in late February and typically last almost into early summer. Hellebores actually belong to the buttercup family but have been popular in cottage gardens since the Middle Ages, when monks used their mildly poisonous blooms for making purging toxins. Few garden plants have such a romantic heritage. In Christian lore, the five-pedaled blooms supposedly sprang from the tears of a poor girl who had no gift for the baby Jesus. According to another legend, Alexander the Great may have died from being treated with a purging tonic made from hellebores, though the facts remain a mystery. No mystery about our garden's hardy survivor, though. Come March, long before the dogwoods and azaleas begin their show, our Lenten rose rewards us with glorious blooms that last a small eternity — the true herald of early Southern spring.

A Brief Garden To-Do List

1. Last chance to prune, divide and shape shrubs, before leaves appear.
2. Rake out perennial beds and supplement with fresh organic material. This is the time for planting tender bulbs such as dahlias, tuberous begonias and gladiolus.
3. Garden shops and nurseries are at capacity with their broadest offering of late summer perennials, plants like coreopsis, coneflowers, autumn sedums, and asters. Now's the time to plan and shop.
4. Sew leaf lettuce and spinach as soon as the soil is ready, carefully spacing plantings to assure continual harvest.
5. Apply a good organic spring fertilizer to your lawn. Clean and replenish bird feeders.

Garden Beasties

"If you can leave a little corner of your garden to grow wild, this will please the fairies, and many little animals will visit by day and by night. Some of these may partake of your seeds and flowers, yet this is only nature's wise plan, for moles improve the soil and birds assist pollination. Each insect and animal plays its part in the Great Scheme, and its soul has mystery. Even the humble crawling beasts bear secrets within them to which we should pay reverence."

— *Garden Spells*, By Claire Nahmad

March 2014

Arts Calendar

Susan G Komen Race for the Cure

3/1

Curling Lessons

3/1

Chris Norman & David Greenberg in concert

3/9

3/1 Race for the Cure

8:30 a.m. Susan G. Komen Foundation's biggest fundraiser of the year features a survivor breakfast, Zumba warm-up, photos, survivor tribute, 5k, 1-mile fun run and kids dash. Admission: $20–35. Second and Market Streets, Wilmington. Info: (877) 506-7501 or www.komennctriangle.org.

3/1 Cape Fear Literacy Gala

6:30–11:30 p.m. Fundraiser/celebration featuring live and silent auctions, casino games, drinks, dinner, dancing and live music. Admission: $125/person, $1,250/table of 10. All proceeds benefit the Cape Fear Literacy Council. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-0911 or www.cfliteracy.org.

3/1 Cape Fear Beer Fest

1–5 p.m. Unlimited tasting of more than one hundred craft and international beers, wines and ciders from some of the finest brew masters in the world. Food options will be available for purchase. Admission: $45/VIP; $35/general; $20/designated driver. A portion of proceeds benefit the Downtown Business Alliance. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5101 or www.capefearbeerfest.com.

3/1 Cardinal Strut

8 a.m. USATF certified and champion chip timed 10k, 5k and 1-mile competitive race. Admission: $10–40. All proceeds benefit the Holly Tree Elementary School P.T.A. Holly Tree Elementary School, 3020 Web Trace, Wilmington. Info: (910) 512-0927 or www.cardinalstrut.com.

3/1 Hobby Greenhouse Tour

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Self-guided tour of local commercial, institutional and personal greenhouses throughout New Hanover, Brunswick and Pender counties. Admission: Free. Starts at New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 319-7588 or www.hobbygreenhouseclub.org.

3/1 Curling Lessons

5 p.m. – 7:15 p.m. Instruction by the Wilmington Curling Club on the basics of curling including delivery of the stone, sweeping, game strategy, scoring, etiquette and rules. Admission: $20. Wilmington Ice House, 7201 Ogden Business Lane, Wilmington. Info: (910) 742-0008 or www.coastalcurling.com.

3/1 Oyster Shellebration

4 p.m. – 7 p.m. Oyster roast featuring drinks, live music, silent auction and games. Admission: $35–45. Proceeds benefit the North Carolina Coastal Federation. Tidal Creek Co-Op, 5329 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 509-2838 or www.tidalcreek.coop.

3/1 Roller Derby

7 p.m. Cape Fear Roller Girls verses the Carolina Roller Girls featuring concessions, merchandise and a meet-and-greet with the team. Admission: $5–12. Proceeds benefit the Rape Crisis Center. Cape Fear Community College, Schwartz Center, 601 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: www.capefearrollergirls.com.

3/1 Fermental Anniversary Party

3 p.m. One-year celebration featuring live music in the beer garden, The Catch food truck, outdoor games, prizes, raffles and giveaways. Admission: Free. Fermental, 7250 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 821-0362 or www.fermental.net.

3/1 Poetry Reading

3 p.m. Poetry reading featuring Ciara Henihan, Addy Robinson McCulloch and the 2014 Gilbert-Chappell "Distinguished Poet for Eastern North Carolina," Lavonne J. Adams. Admission: Free. New Hanover Public Library Myrtle Grove Branch, 5155 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6390 or www.nhcgov.com/library.

3/1 Dinner Theater

7 p.m. Admission: $18–28. A musical comedy by TheatreNOW featuring an Irish wake and authentic Irish characters. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

3/1 Meditation for Happiness

5:15–6 p.m. Learn how to release old, blocked or borrowed energy to better enjoy life, work and good health. Admission: $15. Groove Jet Salon, 112 Princess Street, Wilmington. Info: (949) 547-4402 or www.alloverhealing.com.

3/1–2 Live Theater

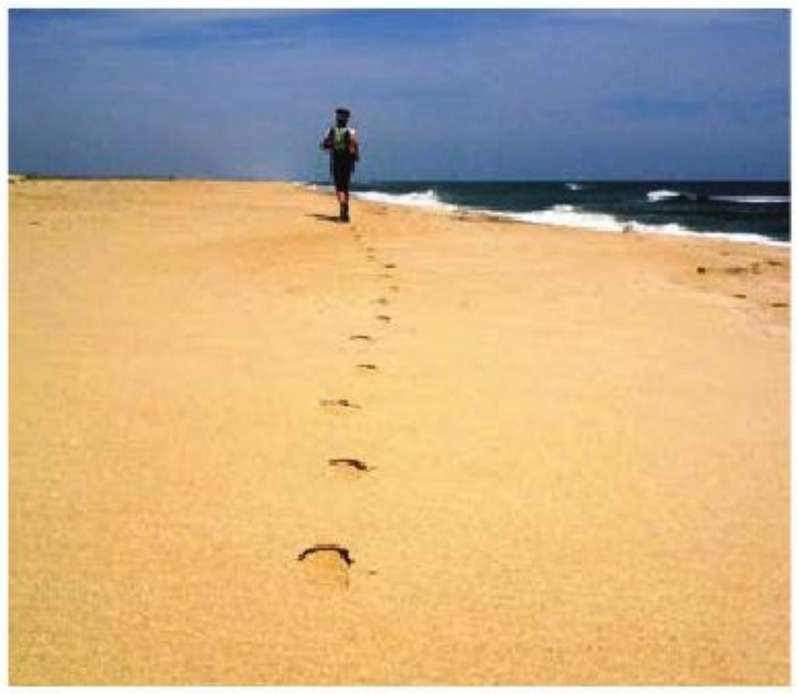
8 p.m. (Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Opera House Theatre Company presents the hit musical, *Evita,* based on the life of Evita Duarte, one of the most influential leaders in Argentina's history. Admission: $27. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

3/1–2 Live Theater

8 p.m. (Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). *Romantic Comedy* by Bernard Slade; Directed by Nick Smith. Admission: $15–20. Cape Fear Playhouse, 613 Castle Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 367-5237 or www.bigdawgproductions.org.

3/2 Evening on the Red Carpet

7:30 p.m. Fundraiser/celebration featuring a red carpet entrance, live broadcast of the Oscars, local cuisine, craft cocktails, popcorn, Academy Award pool and silent auction. Admission: $100–180. Screen Gems Studios, 1223 North Twenty-third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-5995 or www.cucalorus.org.



Badwater Cape Fear Race

3/22

3/2 Wedding Showcase

12–3 p.m. Wedding show presented by *The Perfect Wedding Planner* magazine featuring dozens of local vendors to help with every facet of planning and executing a wedding. Admission: $5. Holiday Inn Resort, 1706 North Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 793-4044 or www.theperfectweddingplanner.com.

3/2 Kayaking Bird Tour

8–11:30 a.m. Kayaking and bird-watching around Eagle Island with local experts, Wild Bird & Garden and guide company, Manhanaim Adventures. Admission: $45, includes kayak equipment. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

3/3 Live Theater

8 p.m. Wilmington Concert Association presents Bizet's *Carmen* performed by the acclaimed Teatro Lirico D'Europa. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts.

3/4 Early Dentistry Lecture

7 p.m. Presented by John Mosley. Admission: $5 donation appreciated. All proceeds benefit the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society. Latimer House, 126 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-0492 or www.hslcf.org.

3/6 Coastal Consumer Showcase

4–7 p.m. Explore the array of product and service options in the Southport-Oak Island area with food samples, giveaways, an interactive fashion show, fitness assessments and shag lessons. Admission: Free. St. James Community Center, 4136 Southeast Southport-Supply Road, St. James. Info: (910) 457-6964.

3/6 Jazz at the CAM

6:30–8 p.m. Lee Venters on drums, Teddy Burgh on flute, Kevin Kolb on keyboard and Taylor Lee on Bass, performing original compositions as well as Latin and jazz classics with influences from Brazil and the Caribbean. Admission: $12/non-members; $8/members; $5/students. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

3/8 BooksmARTS

3 p.m. Clyde Edgerton interviews Lee Smith, Randall Kenan and Jill McCorkle; three of North Carolina's most celebrated writers. Admission: $25. UNCW Lumina Theater, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-4045 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

3/8 New York Voices in Concert

7 p.m. Grammy-winning jazz vocal quartet celebrates twenty-five years of vocal artistry with a mix of traditional sensibilities and a dash of the unexpected. Admission: $35/prime; $28/choice; $18/gallery. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632.2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

3/8 Swamp Birds of the Cape Fear

9:15–10:30 a.m. Informative program hosted by James Abbott of the Coastal Plain Conservation Group on the region's swamps and the birds that call them home. Admission: Free. Temptations Everyday Gourmet, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

3/8 Pet Expo

11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Pet expo featuring pet adoptions, exotic parrot display, face painting, raffles, pictures and music. Admission: Free. Wilmington Moose Lodge 343, 4610 Carolina Beach Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 471-2186.

3/8 Family Expo

10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Interactive fun for moms and families-to-be including infant and child CPR demonstrations, car seat checks, door prizes, giveaways and exhibitors. Admission: $5. Schwartz Center, 601 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: www.thefamexpo.com.

3/9 Celtic Concert

5 p.m. Music fest with Nova Scotia duo Chris Norman and David Greenberg on boxwood flute and violin. St. Thomas Preservation Hall, 208 Dock Street, Wilmington. Tickets/Info: (910) 343-1079 or www.chambermusicwilmington.org.

3/11 Healing Meditation

7–8 p.m. Healing meditation for depression. Admission: $15. Port City Mediums, 21 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (949) 547-4402 or www.alloverhealing.com.

3/12 Wine & Cupcake Pairing

6–8 p.m. Four mini cupcakes by Coastal Cupcakes paired with wines by Fortunate Glass. Cost: $28 (does not include tax or gratuity); reservations required. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

3/13–16 NC Black Film Festival

Four-day juried festival presented by the Black Arts Alliance will showcase independently made features, shorts, animation and documentary films by African-American filmmakers. Various locations, Wilmington. Info: (910) 620-3133 or www.blackartsalliance.org.

3/14–16 Cape Fear Wildlife Expo

9 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Friday and Saturday); 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Three-day event featuring more than one hundred exhibitors with interactive displays, workshops and educational activities showcasing the state's natural resources, wildlife, conservation and outdoor recreation. Admission: $7–10. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5101 or www.capefearwildlifeexpo.com.

3/14 Bridge Tournament

2:30 p.m. Bridge game/party featuring door prizes, food and a raffle. Admission: $25. Proceeds benefit the Wilmington Symphony Youth Education Program. Lower Cape Fear YMCA, 2815 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 791-9262 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

3/14 Empty Bowls Luncheon

11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Luncheon of soups and breads furnished by local restaurants; each guest receives a hand-crafted pottery bowl made by local artists. Admission: $20. Proceeds benefit the Good Shepherd Center and Mother Hubbard's Cupboard. First Baptist Church Activities Center, 1939 Independence Boulevard, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-4424 or www.goodshepherd-wilmington.org.

3/14 Art Show Reception

7–9 p.m. Art of the Bellamy features the works of several artists who have explored the grand theme of the Bellamy Mansion's site in various mediums and from radically different perspectives. Admission: Free. On display from March 10–April 12. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

3/14 Celtic Tenors in Concert

8 p.m. World-class tenors step away from their classical roots and add a contemporary edge with influences of folk, Irish and pop for a memorable musical voyage. Admission: $35/prime; $28/choice; $18/gallery. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

3/14–15 Video and Dance

8 p.m. Video/dance collaborative featuring Bridgman/Packer's *Voyeur*, inspired by the paintings of Edward Hopper and *Under the Skin*, which uses the dancers' bodies and costumes as projection screens. Admission:

$8–25. UNCW Main Stage Theatre, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.artsquest.org.

3/15 Seafood and BBQ Banquet

7–11 p.m. Low country banquet hosted by the Cape Fear Wildlife Foundation featuring an open bar, raffles and live and silent auctions. Admission: $50–75. Coastline Convention Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 795-0292.

3/15 Arts Sensation Dance

8 p.m. Live music and dance benefit performance by Forward Motion Dance. Admission: $15. Proceeds benefit Kids Making It of Wilmington. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

3/15 Symphony Pops Concert

8 p.m. Broadway veterans Amy and Ben Wright delight the audience with sparkling selections from Broadway's songbook. Admission: $40/adult; $20/child or student. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.wilmington-symphony.org.

3/15 Red Cross Gala

6 p.m. – 12 a.m. Fundraiser/celebration featuring live and silent auctions, a gourmet dinner, live music, dancing and guest speaker Dave Sanderson. Admission: $150/person; $1,200/table of 8. Proceeds benefit the American Red Cross in Brunswick, Columbus, Duplin, New Hanover and Pender counties. UNCW Burney Center, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-2683 or www.redcross.org.

3/15 Lo Tide Run

8:30 a.m. Annual 5k/10k race that takes a scenic route through the neighborhoods around Carolina Beach Lake followed by an after-party at The Lazy Pirate with food, music, dancing and raffles. Admission: $30–35. Proceeds are donated to local families in financial crisis who are battling cancer. Carolina Beach Boardwalk, 100 Cape Fear Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 368-9523 or www.lotiderun.org.

3/15 Gospel Comedy

3 p.m. Gospel comedy *Laugh Until It Hurts* features artist Elder Alcindor Hankins, aka LaSalle LaSalle, and heavy hors d'oeuvres. Admission: $15. St. Stephen AME Church Fellowship Hall, 501 Redcross Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-9829 or www.ststephenamewilm.org.

3/15 Battleship Power Plant Program

12–5:30 p.m. Afternoon exploring the U.S.S. *North Carolina*'s power plant, featuring classroom presentations and a behind-the-scenes tour of the ship's engineering spaces. Admission: $60–65. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

3/15 Festival and Parade

11 a.m. – 6 p.m. St. Patrick's Day parade and celebration featuring entertainment by the Wilmington Police Pipes and Drums, The Blarney Broughs, The Molly Malones, Walsh Kelley School of Irish Dancing and the Slainte UNCW Irish Dance Club. Vendors will offer cultural items, food and beer for purchase. Admission: Free. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (216) 374-8884 or www.wilmingtonstpatricksdayfestival.com.

3/16 Wrightsville Beach Marathon

6:45 a.m. Marathon, half marathon and relay challenge presented by Landfall Realty which travels 26.2 miles through the scenic Landfall community to Mayfaire Town Center. Admission: $110/marathon; $90/half marathon; $70/relay. Proceeds benefit The Landfall Foundation, The Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation and other local charities. Salisbury Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 297-4973 or www.wrightsvillebeachmarathon.com.

3/17–28 Conference and Expo

11:30 a.m. – 7 p.m. Region's largest annual gathering of the business community featuring more than one hundred exhibitors from a range of different industries, free seminars, a keynote lunch and an after hours networking event. Admission: $5. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-8600 or www.wilmingtonbiz.com.

3/18 Live Theater

7 p.m. Sophisticated musical, *The Fantastics*, presented by the Nebraska Theatre Caravan featuring themes of fantasy, innocence, reality and meaningful love, live piano and harp accompaniment and a steam punk spin on costume, set and prop design. Admission: $5–22. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/presents.

3/19–26 Encore Restaurant Week

Eight-day culinary celebration featuring more than thirty restaurants throughout the Port City offering prix fixe menus at a special price. Wilmington. Info: (910) 791-0688 or www.encorerestaurantweek.com.

3/20 Purse Auction and Raffle

6–8 p.m. Fundraiser presented by Wilmington Health Access for Teens (WHAT) featuring a selection of purses donated by local boutiques, retailers and designers, a purse fashion show hosted by Belk, giveaways, drinks, and sweet and savory treats. Admission: $35–40. Proceeds help provide physical and mental health services to local underserved teens. Country Club of Landfall, 800 Sun Runner Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 202-4605 or www.whatswhat.org.

3/20 Hibiscus Luncheon & Dinner

11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. (Lunch); 6–6:45 p.m. (Reception); 7 p.m. (Dinner). Fundraiser luncheon and dinner featuring comedian, writer and producer, Lizz Winstead. Proceeds benefit Planned Parenthood. Blockade Runner, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wilmington. Info: (910) 833-7526.

3/20–23 Live Theater

8 p.m. (Thursday–Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Thalian Association presents the classic John Steinbeck story, *Of Mice and Men*, about two displaced migrant ranch hands in Depression-era California. An exploration of compassion, human fragility, racism and community. Admission: $25. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

3/21 Variety Show

7:30 p.m. Variety Show featuring standup comedy, music and spoken word. Admission: Free. Bourbon Street, 35 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-4050.

3/21 Fashion Show

8 p.m. Fashion show featuring a meal catered by Middle of the Isle, silent auction, live music by Groove Fetish and a spring/summer swimwear preview. Admission: $15–20. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

3/21 Golf Tournament

1 p.m. Golf tournament/fundraiser hosted by the Lump to Laughter Ministry including a silent auction, raffle, cocktail party and celebrity guest players. Admission: $200/person; $800/foursome. Proceeds benefit the Lump to Laughter Breast Cancer Support Ministry. Country Club of Landfall, 800 Sun Runner Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 617-4455 or www.lumptolaughter.org.

3/21 Pets Rock Fundraiser

7–10 p.m. Annual fundraiser presented by the Coastal Animal Rescue Effort including heavy hors d'oeuvres, a cash bar, silent auction and live music by the Bibis Ellison Band. Admission: $40. All proceeds benefit C.A.R.E. and the medical needs of homeless animals. Terraces at Sir Tyler, 1808 Sir Tyler Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-2624 or www.carewilmington.org.

3/21–22 Standup Comedy

7 p.m. Standup performances by Cliff Cash, J. Bliss, Julie Scoggins, Burpie, Jodi White and Dale Jones in celebration of the Blockade Runner's 50th anniversary. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2251 or www.blockade-runner.com.

3/22 Oyster Roast

7–11 p.m. Oyster roast, open bar, live NCAA basketball tournament coverage, live music by the Millenia Funk'n Band, raffles and silent auction. Admission: $50. Proceeds benefit the Junior League of Wilmington. Cape Fear Country Club, 1518 Country Club Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 799-7405 or www.jlwnc.org/wilmington.

3/22 Light Up the Night Fundraiser

6–11:30 p.m. Fundraiser/celebration hosted by P3 Picture Perfect Planning featuring puzzle lights in honor of loved ones, drink specials, food, bands, photo booth, vendors, raffles, auction, face painting and special performances. Admission: Free to attend; $25–30/light. Proceeds benefit Love is Bald and the Pretty in Pink Foundation. Capt'n Bills, 4240 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: www.youcaring.com/nonprofits/light-up-the-night.

3/22 Badwater Cape Fear Race

6–11:30 p.m. AdventureCORPS' inaugural 51.4-mile ultra running race along the Atlantic Seaboard. Admission: $195–250/51.4-mile; $195–175/32-mile; $40–50/12-mile. Proceeds benefit the Bald Head Island Conservancy. Bald Head Island. Info: www.badwater.com/capefear.

3/22 Hell Haul Race

9 a.m. Full trail run through the Half Hell Swamp of the Boiling Lakes Preserve. Admission: $25–30/7k; $15–20/1-mile. Proceeds benefit The Nature Conservancy Venus Flytrap Protection Fund. Boiling Spring Lakes Community Center, 1 Leeds Road, Boiling Spring Lakes. Info: www.its-go-time.com/halfhellhaul2014.

3/22 Farm to Table Gala

6–10 p.m. Farm-to-table benefit including cocktails, live entertainment by L-Shape Lot and a multi-course meal of locally grown, raised, harvested and produced food prepared by local chefs. Admission: $80/per-

son; $150/couple. Proceeds benefit Feast Down East. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 U.S. Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-7105 or www.feastdowneast.org.

3/22–23 Coastal Living Show

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Annual exhibit presented by the Wilmington Woman's Club featuring more than one hundred vendors selling goods and services and demonstrating the latest trends in home, garden, office and seaside living. Admission: Free. Schwartz Center, Cape Fear Community College, 601 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5031 or www.wilmingtonwomansclub.com.

3/23 Meet the Author

3 p.m. Meet legendary North Carolina author Anne Barnhill. Old Front Street Books, 249 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6657 or www.oldbooksonfrontst.com.

3/24 Southern Tea

3 p.m. Gone with the Wind southern tea affair in the historic antebellum mansion. Admission: $35. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700x303 or www.bellamymansion.org.

3/24 Celtic Nights Production

7 p.m. Unique show featuring some of Ireland's most prominent talents including traditional dancing, musicianship, costumes, sets and lighting. Admission: $5–25. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/presents.

3/27 Book Talk and Lunch

11 a.m. Book talk with Anne Russell on her novel *Tropical Depression* followed by a lunch in the tea room. Admission: $5/talk; $15/talk and lunch. All proceeds benefit the Lower Cape Fear Historic Society. Latimer House, 126 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-0492 or www.hslcf.org.

3/27 Bluegrass Concert

8 p.m. Banjo maestros and bluegrass power couple Béla Fleck and Abigail Washburn come together for a rare evening of traditional and original compositions inspired by contemporary-progressive bluegrass and music throughout the world. Admission: $25–35. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts.

3/28 Fourth Friday Gallery Walk

6–9 p.m. Self-guided tour of local galleries and studios coordinated by the Arts Council of Wilmington showcasing art and art-related events including opening receptions, demonstrations, artist discussions and exhibitions. Admission: Free. Various locations, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.wilmingtonfourthfridays.com.

3/28 United Way Pajama Party

7–10 p.m. Fundraiser hosted by the Cape Fear United Way including food, wine, music, dancing, a silent auction and pajama contest. Admission: $45. Proceeds benefit the Cape fear Homeless Medical Respite Project. Shell Island Resort, 2700 North Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 798-3900 or www.uwcfa.org.

3/28 Opening Art Exhibition

6 p.m. – 9 p.m. Opening reception featuring artwork from the locally filmed TV series *Under the Dome*. CFCC Wilma W. Daniels Gallery, 200 Hanover Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7000 or cfcc.edu/blogs/wilmagallery.

3/28–29 Car Show

3–8 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Saturday). Car show hosted by Sun Coast Cruisers featuring a night cruise, free social, DJ, poker walk, raffle, awards, various craft, commercial and food vendors and live music by the Coco-Loco Band. Admission: $20–25. Fort Fisher Air Force Recreation Area, 118 Riverfront Road, Kure Beach. Info/Register: (910) 409-0231 or www.backtothebeachcarshow.com.

3/28–29 Handmade Marketplace

3–9 p.m. Showcase of handmade creations by local craftsmen and artisans including art, clothing, accessories and home and garden items. Food trucks and cash bar onsite. Admission: $5. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

3/29 Walk and Dog Dash

9 a.m. Pet-friendly fundraiser including pet photographs, food vendors, raffles and a two-mile walk around scenic Hugh MacRae Park. Admission: Proceeds benefit Canines for Service. $25–35. Hugh MacRae Park, 314 Pine Grove Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7620 or www.canineforservice.org.

3/29 Wild Bird Program

9:15–10:30 a.m. Learn about the lives, preferred habitat, feeding and nesting behaviors of the Swallow-tailed Kite by James Abbott of the Coastal Plain Conservation Group. Admission: Free. Temptations Everyday Gourmet, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

3/29–30 Herb and Garden Fair

9 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Sunday). Garden event featuring local produce, plants, herbal products, art and crafts, a raffle, food vendors and a variety of classes and activities led by local experts. Admission: Free. Proceeds benefit Poplar Grove Plantation. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 U.S. Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.com.

3/30 Paws4People Race

9 a.m. Pet-friendly 10k, 5k and 1-mile fun run along the roads and trails of UNCW's campus and the Cross City Trail; event also features raffle. Admission: $35–45/10k; $25–35/5k; $20/1-mile run. Proceeds benefit Paws4People animal assistance programs. UNCW Fisher Student Center, 615 Hamilton Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.p4pwilmington5k.com.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Tuesday Improv Comedy

8 p.m. LitProve: Long Form Improv at Old Books on Front Street, 249 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6657 or oldbooksonfrontst.com.

Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM

12–1 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Wednesday Free Wine Tasting

5–6:30 p.m. For this week's special, visit Sweet n Savory Cafe on Facebook. Sweet n Savory Cafe, 1611 Pavilion Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-0115 or www.sweetnsavorycafe.com.

Wednesday Free Beer Tasting

5–6:30 p.m. For this week's special, visit Sweet n Savory Pub on Facebook. Sweet n Savory Pub, 2012 Eastwood Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 679-8101 or www.thepubatsweetnsavory.com.

Wednesday Group Meditation

6:15–7:15 p.m. A growing community of people who desire connection within themselves and with others. McKay Healing Arts, 4916 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Donation: $10–15. Info: (949) 547-4402 or www.alllovehealing.com.

Wednesday ComedyNOW

8 p.m. Local, regional and national acts, open mics, standup, films and more. Bar and kitchen open. Tickets: $3. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Thursday Yoga at CAM

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. These sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Thursday CAM Public Tours

7:30 p.m. Explore the newest exhibits at Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday Yoga at CAM

5:30–6:30 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. These sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Saturday Super Saturday Fun Time

3 p.m. Live theater and variety show. Tickets: $8. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Sunday CAM Public Tours

2 p.m. Explore the newest exhibits at Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

To add a calendar event, please contact Ashley at ashley@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

Port City People

Azalea Pre-festival Party
Riverside Hilton Hotel
Friday, January 17, 2013
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Karen Kelly, Kimberly Snaufenbuel, Chesare Bullock, Lori Antieau

Paxton Webster
Azalea Princess

Lou and Pat Smith

Joelle Ando, Kelly Godfrey, Kelly Foreman

Emily Bell, Diane Stirewalt

Cynthia and Craig Holden

Ken Connoly, Kerry O'Neill, Mike and Vicky Russell

Lukas and Ashley Trosman

Shelby Moore, Sarah Kenney

Julie Kraus, Sabrina Collins

Laura Ficken, Stephanie Rambo, Kippy Batuyias

Leah King, Cathy Bouchard, Ken King, John Gillian, Jacquelyn Gillian

Port City People

Cape Fear Heart Ball

Saturday, February 8, 2014

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Sandy Spiers, Frank Potter

Bo Dean, Susan Hickey, Janet Rodger, Michelle Clark

Melanie and Joe Welsh

Chrissy Sinclair, Tiffany Holland, Kristin Manning

Derek Backton, Clayton Dorsey, Melissa Gallison, Nick Green, Bryan Smith, Jim Hopkins

Myra Webb, Sharon Laney, Sonya and Allen Perry

Melissa Davis, Gregory Kot

Michael and Stacy Ankrum, Henry Cheery, Jenny Turek, Greg Neel

Kip and April Damrow, Myra and Phillip Hamilton

Angela Johnson, Teresa Midgett

Pam Lyerly-Stephens, Karen Tunis

Sebena and Andy Collins

Christin and John Gizdic

Port City People

Wilmington Wine and Chocolate Festival

Friday & Saturday, January 31 & February 1, 2013

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Dylan McGowan, Shelby McGowan, Sydney Jones

Dena Manning

Michael, Sherri and Greg Warren

Lauren Rich, Kim Smith

Morgan McLamb, Elgin Vitale

Erin Rhyne, Tyler Moore

Darya Suddretti, Lianne Cole and Shad Cole

Shirley Parsons

Brenda Crews, Suzann Holmes, Pat Council, Opal Shepherd, Jenny Smith

Patrizia Denton

Shannon Warner, Pete Gruodis

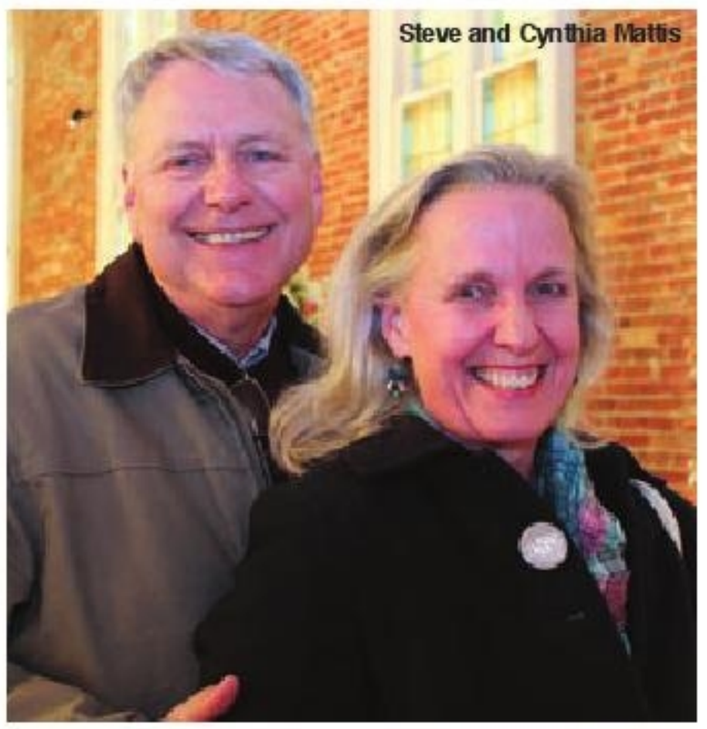
Amber Hurst

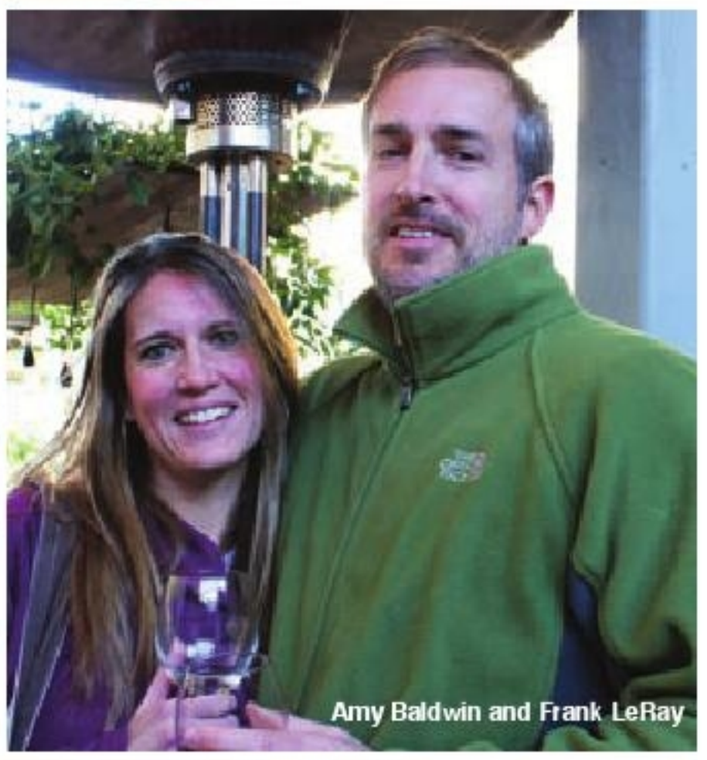
Port City People

Courtyards & Cobblestones
A Walk Through Wedding Row
Saturday, January 18, 2014
Photographs by Ariel Keener

Leanne Haskins with Theo and Hannah Milo

Abi & Michael Mattis


Steve and Cynthia Mattis


Amy Baldwin and Frank LeRay

Steve DeLange, Jud Smith, Ryan Qualliotine

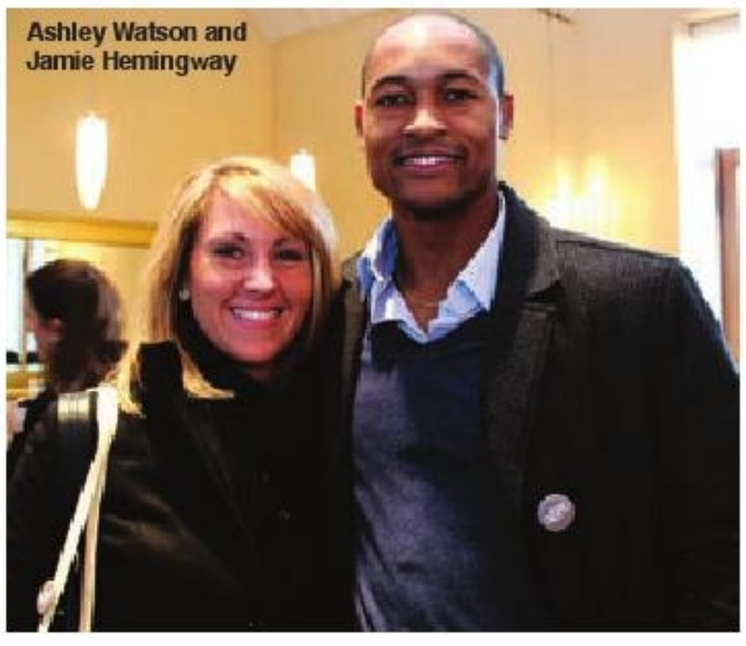
Alisha Payne and Courtney Bridgers

Shelly Cobler, Tracy Moon, Julie Grubbs

Adam Gilbert, Dave Afrika, Carly Tanner, Austin Stinson

Filip Radzikowsaki, Megan, Craig and Patti Scott

Chancey Funderburk


Ashley Watson and Jamie Hemingway

Port City People

UNCW Biennial Faculty Exhibition
UNCW Cultural Arts Building
Thursday, January 16, 2013
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Bonnie England, Janette Hopper, Charles Kernan

Andi Steele

Donald Furst

Lizzie Harris, Jessica Varriale

Jessie and George Myers

Courtney Johnson
Gallery Director

Denise Battles

Rebekah Cobb, Elizabeth Oglesby

Anne Lindberg, Owen Wexler

Gallery

Brenda Pate

Have Free, Will Travel

By Astrid Stellanova

A client spotted me at the P.O. and the poor old thing was a little pouty, claiming my astral forecast got her down. Lordamercy, ole Astrid is a straight-shooting truth teller, but free will is free will, and that don't just apply to the Baptists. The world's best actor, Kevin Bacon, once said, "The fault, dear Reader, lies not in our stars . . ." Which means, it ain't Astrid's fault if sometimes I laid some bad news down. Anyhow, this month you'll hear only from Good News Astrid. I don't want no moping around when I get to the P.O. window to pick up next month's Hair, Nails and Karma Secrets shipment.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)

Birthdays are like Spanx. They may take some getting used to, but once you get your groove thing on, things look pretty doggone good. You're wearing them birthdays well, too. Looks like a little sunscreen and lipo went a long way. Here's how Pisces is going to roll for 2014: If you like icing, lick it. If you like cake, have it. Do it your way, my fishes, and make your wishes. This spring brings a transit through Pisces in Venus by April 5 till early May, bringing you straight to the golden-plated gates of love. Brace yourself for a good time.

Aries (March 21–April 19)

By now, everybody who knows you knows how much you like action and traction. Guess what? With both a lunar and solar eclipse in the same month, you get your wish: all the action you can handle. Just be sure your loved ones can handle you. If money feels tight, open your pockets. More's coming. Don't hock that gold chain yet. You are working a whole new attitude, which might even get you to a new latitude. (Sometimes astral vibes slide straight in on the FM channel via my back molar! It's like dental Sirius – one bicuspid over I can hear Jimmy Buffett.)

Taurus (April 20–May 20)

A bull doesn't have to take any bull, so let that be your motto. With a new moon in Pisces, Taurus may want to do like my celestial guidebook says and write a novel. (Or not. How many Taurus novelists do you know right off hand?) You're skeptical, I know, thinking, Astrid consults with a celestial guide? But then, a Taurus couldn't imagine a red, white or blue-blooded Taurus bull with inertia. You got enough forward momentum to take charge of the arena, pasture or office, and that, for certain, is no bull, Baby.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)

A transit in your sign this month is sure good for business, Sugar. But what business are you in, exactly? That's what the universe is asking you. Clarity, little twin, is the main aim. This month is such a blur, too, complicated by not one, not two, but three lunations. When you are awake and conscious, you have great opportunities. You got more wishes and dreams coming true than a toddler at Disney World. Save a little magic, and spread it around. Not everybody has your good luck – and this month you get second, third, fourth and fifth chances.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)

Busy is your middle name right now. But you kinda like it like that, don'tcha? On the 1st and 16th, take time out when a full moon occurs in Virgo. A full moon in Virgo happens again on the 30th. If you want to travel, try something creative. Dollywood is a personal favorite. You can plug in or drop outta sight, or just do what Astrid does. Sit real still till it gets clear, figure out your wardrobe and accessories, then fill the tank and pack the Samsonite. Sometimes all you need is a thong and a prayer. And leopard print goes with everything.

Leo (July 23–August 22)

There's busy, and then there's wild. You, Child, are dialing full tilt toward wild. If you have the strength by the middle of the month, go on a trip with your one-and-only and make some memories that don't require clothes. (Honey, when Astrid talks about skin in the game, she ain't talking about football, either.) If you wait till the 16th, there's a full moon in Virgo, which means money. Check the soda machine – you might find some quarters waiting. Refresh your beverage and get back to whatever magic elixir you've been drinking. Honey, it's working.

Virgo (August 23 –September 22)

Beginning March 2, Saturn is retro in Scorpio till late July. What that means is you go full retro all the way – you will be tempted to second-guess everything from family ties to whether a neighbor tried to poison the cat. But you have more friends than frenemies, and just chalk this mess up to the stars messing with your mojo. One very tempting offer is coming your way; take it slow and serious but it is probably to your benefit to say yes, and thanks, much obliged. This is the universe offering you repayment for something nice you did in the fourth grade. It's that retro thing working in your favor, see?

Libra (September 23–October 22)

Beware the Ides of March. Ole Astrid is just kidding – it's just a few uh-ohs. By the 17th, Mercury is in Pisces so you will have a replay of events from back in January. (OK, I don't know how to say this like it's good news.) The uh-ohs of March are all about work – lots of work details in play, but nothing you can't handle, Dumpling. The flip side: Your love connection is a lotta fun. You could use the balance, get it? Take that windfall, or bonus, and treat you and someone special to a couple's massage. Y'all deserve it.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

When Kim Kardashian and Kanye West named their Scorpio baby "North," Astrid was not surprised. I reckon they wanted to remember which end of the baby was South. Scorpios are big on feng shui. You may want to rearrange the furniture, because you need an outlet and you like doing things your own way. Energy is flowing, but in March you will feel your best in your own space just chilling. Move the sofa but don't move outta town. My hunch is to trust your hunches. You're a natural intuitive, but you already knew that, right?

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)

You're probably glad February ended without another incident, and March is going to be a whole lot smoother. The big drama is over. Ole Astrid sees a nice situation building from March 5–April 5 when a transit in Aquarius enters your third house. Suddenly, after everybody and his brother wanted you to come to dinner, or go shopping, or just hang out, things got quiet. Don't freak out, Sugar. A connection was made, so enjoy what's coming round the bend. Just you wait; destiny has you on speed dial.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)

Coming out of a retrograde may leave Capricorns a little undone. Now you may feel like you are living life backward, but that is almost never true. Unless, of course, it is. (Astrid ain't Einstein, but honestly, sometimes I do think we are living parallel lives.) If you apply for a loan, you'll get it. If you are in the market to meet somebody, you will. When you count your Chicken McNuggets, there will be an extra one. In short, there might be a few hiccups to weather, but you are a lot luckier than most of us this month.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)

Well, with a new moon at the beginning of March in Pisces, another water sign, you get a chance to just ride that big old creative wave like David Hasselhoff on *Baywatch*. This month it don't matter if you're catching a wave or playing poker. Everything is lining up for you just the way my boyfriend Beau likes it when he's got silver in his pocket and a cue stick in his hand: resources, talent and opportunities. Rack up, and get ready to address the ball, cause you got an astral chart even Minnesota Fats woulda loved this month. No win-lose nowhere, Honey, just win-wins.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Wall in the Family

Upon reflection, bring one home. Don't bother marrying it

By Clyde Edgerton

As my 7-year-old daughter, Truma, was being put to bed this last Christmas Eve, she said to Kristina, my wife, "I'm so excited I could marry the wall!"

I wrote a response to read to her later. Here it is:

Sweetie, you probably don't want to marry a wall, but you might want to date one until you get ready to get married. Here are some possible benefits of that:

When you go home with your wall for a family dinner, the other walls at the table wouldn't be asking you a bunch of annoying questions about your hobbies, ambitions and all that.

Your wall wouldn't smoke or curse or get in trouble at school or try to get you in any kind of trouble, like chewing gum when you shouldn't be chewing gum, or being loud and unkind.

Since your wall couldn't drive or talk, the two of you could go to movies of your choice.

Christmas and birthday shopping could be nice because you'd know exactly what present to buy — say, a curtain or a picture to hang.

This evening I read the above to Truma and her BFF, Piper. They started laughing as soon as I started reading. (Sometimes you realize you may have missed your true audience.) Piper interrupted to suggest that besides a curtain or picture to hang, you could buy a doorknob.

Truma said if she married a wall it wouldn't be able to wear a tux to the wedding.

I asked her what the best thing about marrying a wall might be, and she said, "Ah, I don't know."

The worst thing? "You'd have to clean it all the time," she said.

Truma's 8-year-old brother, Ridley, was listening. He said, "You might kiss it and die of lead poisoning."

So Kristina, my wife, walks in. I pop the question: What would be good about marrying a wall?

"Let's see," she said. "You could repaint it and therefore change your life big time. You could pound nails into it [what?!]. You could put in a door so you can invite people in, push people out. You could tear down a wall, make it disappear. You could round the corners. And a wall doesn't talk back. And — "

"Sweetie," I said. "Let's stop there."

"But," she said, "a wall doesn't hug, and keep your feet warm at night. Among other things."

I hadn't thought of — until just now — another twist: In some places, marrying a wall would break the law.

Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir, and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

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